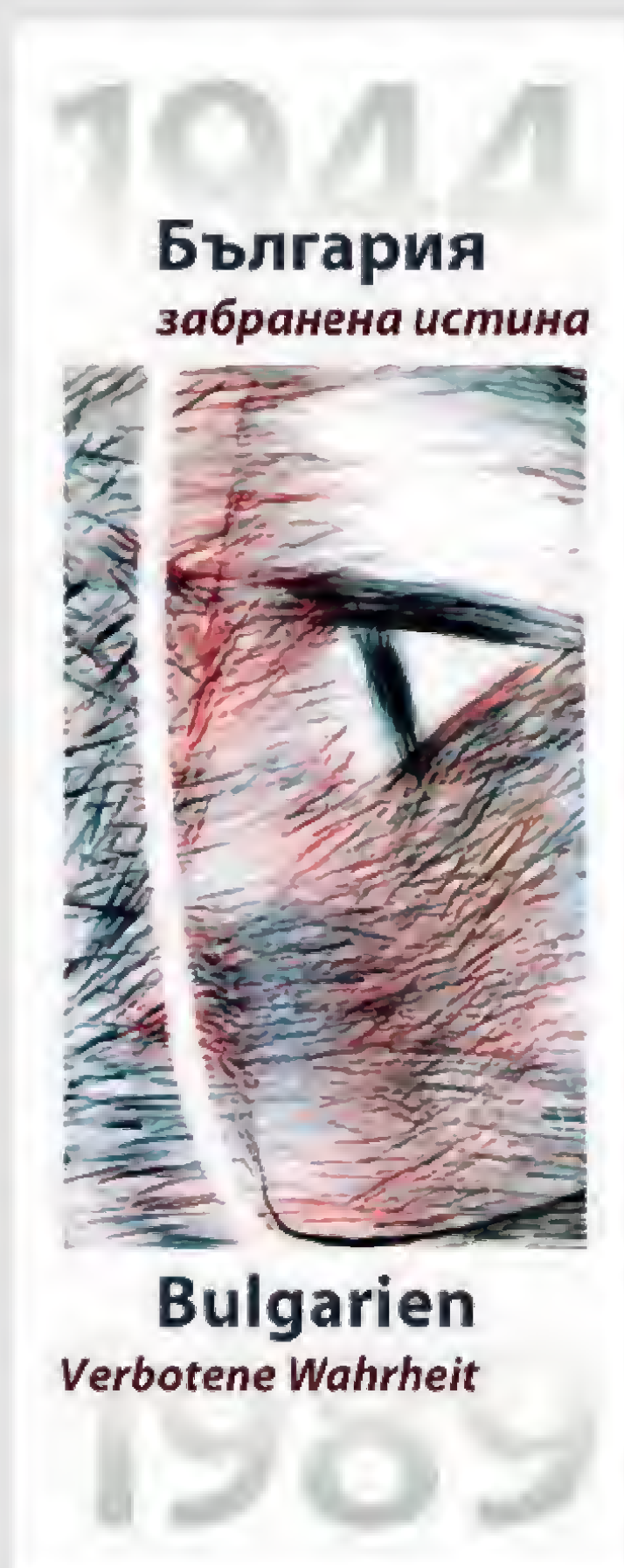


# Bulgaria 1944 - 1989

## Forbidden Truth

Stoyan Raichevsky  
Fanna Kolarova



Gedenkbibliothek  
zu Ehren der Opfer des Kommunismus e.V. Berlin

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# **Bulgaria 1944-1989**

## **Forbidden Truth**

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Speech of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria  
Rossen Plevneliev at the opening of the exhibition  
Bulgaria 1944-1989; Forbidden Truth  
*Sofia, 12 October 2012*

Mr. Ambassador Höpfner, Excellency!

Organizers!

Dear friends!

I am here to congratulate you in all sincerity on having made this exhibition happen; in doing so you have taken a firm stand on the question of the nature of totalitarianism and the attitude we should all have to it. I am here to assure you that I share the ideas behind this initiative and the message it sends.

This exhibition states clearly and unequivocally that nobody can rehabilitate totalitarianism. It sends the strong message that never again can anybody have the power to forbid the truth or manipulate it for their own purposes. It states that the resistance the Bulgarian people put up against the imposition of a totalitarian regime must be brought to light and paid due tribute; the violation of the rights of the citizens, the crimes and the atrocities the authoritarian state committed must not be passed over in silence or brushed aside; the victims must not be forgotten.

It is my firm belief that a nation must have the courage to face its past. We can only be strong and united if we know the truth about our past and show respect to the efforts the preceding generation made to cope with the trials and tribulations of the hard times they had to endure.

We appreciate the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Federal Foundation for Research on the Nature of SED Dictatorship for this project as well as the active participation of the Berlin Library in Commemoration of the Victims of Communism as a notable sign of European solidarity.



The fall of the Berlin Wall was the symbol of the crash of the communist regimes in Europe; it inspired millions of people in Eastern and Central Europe and gave impetus to their desire for a new beginning. The Federal Republic of Germany is a country we can learn a lot from - how we can work steadily and unswervingly in the interest of the unity and stability of a democratic society and in the interest of the generations to come and that we can do this by disclosing the facts and showing the true nature of a totalitarian regime.

I hope that the message of this exhibition will get to a great number of people in many towns and in many regions, to the young as well as to the elderly and I will be only too glad to be of service to the cause. I will work to promote the setting up in the foreseeable future of a museum in memory of the victims of the communist regime in this country, a place where the young people of present day Bulgaria and the future generations will be made aware of the facts about the totalitarian state, its institutions and its State Security apparatus, the way they used to function and the decisions they used to take.

I am here with you today to tell you that you have my full support for a worthy cause. I also realize that it is our duty and our responsibility to address ourselves to the young people of Bulgaria and to assure them that we can face the future without concealing or distorting the truth about the past. We know that a people can only have a future if they respect their past and are proud of it. We must tell the young men and women of Bulgaria that they should not be led astray by what is shallow and superficial or convenient or entertaining, but should strive to understand and deal with the problems of the present day and drawing on the knowledge of the past, build up their future.

I thank the organizers and I thank you all who are here to support a common cause. I'm one of you! I wish you success!

The Berlin “Memorial Library in Commemoration of the Victims of Communism” feels honoured to be able to give its support to the first ever considerable collection of documentary evidence which makes public the crimes perpetrated by the Bulgarian communist regime against its own people. Not only does it for the first time give the German people an insight into the stalinist repressive machine of terror set up in Eastern Europe as specifically applied in Bulgaria but it makes it possible for every person, wherever in Europe, who takes an active interest in this aspect of the horrors of communism, to have their knowledge enlarged and completed.

Considered from this point of view, the Exhibition is a political act in the best traditions of enlightenment; it informs and it gives a warning. For totalitarianism did not perish with the crash of the world communist system; it is a persistent social and political temptation and a grave threat to the rule of law in Europe and the democratic setup of its state systems, now as in the not so distant past.

*Ursula Popiolek*  
*Chairman of the Executive Board*

*Thomas Dahnert*  
*Director of the Memorial Library*





Memories can cause pain but they can also heal wounds. Memories can throw light on some fragments of the past and leave others in darkness.

They can be deliberately falsified or they can be turned into legends. Memories give you identity but they can also be a point of contention or even cause rupture of relations between family members, friends, communities, nations.

The approach to the interpretation of the nature of the communist dictatorships set up in Eastern and Central Europe after the Second World War, which for over four decades determined the lives of the people living under them, is still a subject of controversy at many places. Too often the communist past is painted in bright colours while the truth about the crimes committed by the communist regimes is suppressed. The victims are denied access to public notice or discredited. The perpetrators of atrocities and those guilty of giving the orders have not been brought to justice.

One of the leading ideas behind the restoration process in Germany since 1989 has been to make known the persecutions, repressions and crimes perpetrated by the dictatorial regime, to disclose the repressive structures and the way they functioned, to reveal the mechanisms of intimidation and fear which reduced people to blind or resigned obedience and in this way to counteract the tendency to look back with nostalgia to the illusory “security” of everyday life under dictatorships.



The victims have the right to be remembered. Those who had the courage to brave the regime and paid with long years of imprisonment and the afflicted families, who were stigmatized, harassed and tormented in various ways, have the right to be heard. Each society has to have the strength to face its own past and find its own way to come to terms with it. It does not help to keep silent about its dark sides or shirk responsibilities.

The process of recovery from a repressive regime requires a great deal of sustained effort to reconstruct and rediscover the past experience. The research into the subject needs to be encouraged and given due support. The Federal Foundation for Research on the Nature of SED Dictatorship readily gave its support to the Exhibition Project "Bulgaria 1944-1989 – The Forbidden Truth".

The exhibition sheds light on a period from the recent history of Bulgaria about which very little seems to be known by the general public in the Federal Republic of Germany as well as by the younger generations of Bulgaria. We think it will be beneficial to people in both societies to know what happened in Bulgaria during that period of forty five years. Thus methods and instruments of repression will be compared and knowledge of how dictatorships affect people's lives will be shared. We believe the Exhibition is a significant contribution to the stability of democracy in the two countries and we wish it a high attendance rate both in Bulgaria and the Federal Republic.

*Dr. Anna Kaminsky  
Executive Director of the Federal Foundation for  
Research on the Nature of Dictatorship of the  
United German Socialist Party*

## Bulgaria in the fire of the Second World War

At the beginning of the Second World War, Bulgaria is a Constitutional Monarchy with a population of 6.5 million and spreads over 111,000 square kilometers (42,857 square miles).

On 15 September, 1939 the Bulgarian government issues a decree to declare the country's neutrality in WW II..

On 22 October and 17 November, 1940, the Bulgarian government declines the proposals for the country to join the Tripartite Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan.

On 25 November, 1940, Bulgaria declines yet another proposal made by the Soviet Union for a 'mutual assistance' Treaty providing for stationing Soviet naval bases on the country's territory.

On 1 March, 1941, just a few hours before Wehrmacht troops pass through Bulgarian territory heading for Greece, Bulgarian Prime Minister Bogdan Filov signs the Tripartite Pact in Vienna.

On 13 December, 1941 Bulgaria, being a Tripartite Pact member state, declares war on the United States and the United Kingdom. Acting in response, on 28 December the United Kingdom declares war on Bulgaria and on 3 April, 1942, the United States of America follows suit.

On 1 June, 1944, the Bulgarian government resigns and a new government is appointed, headed by Prime Minister Ivan Bagriyanov, who takes immediate action to pull Bulgaria out of the war with the United Kingdom and the United States. On 26 August the same year, Prime Minister Bagriaynov makes a formal statement declaring that Bulgaria will thereafter observe absolute neutrality.



On 2 September, 1944, the BBC reports:

*“The Bulgarian government flew a negotiation party to Cairo to conduct peace talks with the allies; they are still in Cairo, waiting to receive the armistice terms not made available to them until this very moment”.*

On 2 September, 1944, a new Bulgarian government is appointed, headed by Prime Minister Konstantin Muraviev. The new cabinet goes on with the effort to pull Bulgaria out of the war against the United Kingdom and the United States. The government speeds up the armistice negotiations and grants full amnesty via an “Amnesty Ordinance”, dissolves the 25th National Assembly and declares absolute neutrality.

On 5 September, 1944 at 19 p.m., unprovoked by anything, Soviet authorities hand a note to the Bulgarian Ambassador in Moscow declaring war on Bulgaria. Until then, the two states have maintained regular diplomatic relations. Not a single Bulgarian soldier has taken part in any military action on the Eastern Front. Until that moment, the Bulgarian Army has carried out only strategic missions in the South-East of Europe just in case a new front opened up. The only Bulgarian troops ever dispatched north of the Danube River have been a Red Cross mission.

On 5 September, 1944, Reuters' diplomatic correspondent Randall Neal comments: *"The British government had received advance notice that Russia would declare war on Bulgaria. This realistic step taken by the Russians will help Bulgarians sober up and possibly speed up the signing of an armistice. It will also put an end to Bulgaria's efforts to avoid paying a heavy toll for its alliance with Germany. A new Bulgarian government will have to be formed to represent left-wing parties, undoubtedly including the communists"*.

On 7 September, 1944, Izvestiya, a Moscow daily, comments: *"The Bulgarian authorities have decided that they could continue supporting Germany, while playing around with the "neutrality" concept, although this might drag the country into an abyss"*.

**Aided by the Soviet Army,  
the Bulgarian communists seize power.**

On 8 September, 1944, the Soviet Army invades Bulgaria and occupies the country until December 1947. The Bulgarian Army is put under Soviet command and political commanders are institutionalized.

On 28 October, 1944, an Armistice is signed between the governments of Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In actual fact, this Armistice endorses the occupation of Bulgaria by the Soviet Army. Soviet Marshal Tolbukhin is appointed Chairman of the newly established Allied Control Committee with fellow countryman Colonel General Biryuzov as his Deputy.



On 8 September, 1944, with Soviet troops about to set foot on Bulgarian soil, the National Committee of the "Fatherland Front", a communist-dominated coalition, comes out with an appeal proclaiming themselves as the country's only political entity that is in the confidence of the Anti-Hitler coalition, at the same time accusing Prime Minister Muraviev's cabinet of vacillation and hypocrisy towards the Soviet Union".

On 9 September, 1944 at 2:15 a.m., when the Soviet Army has already invaded Bulgaria, army officers of the "Zveno" political circle overthrow the democratic government of Konstantin Muraviev and hand over the power to the "Fatherland Front" communist coalition. On the same day, at 6:25 a.m., the Bulgarian Radio announces to the Bulgarian citizens that a new government has been formed, headed by Kimon Georgiev.

Until then, the Bulgarian communist party has had but a few thousand members. After the coup, the communist party exercises absolute power over the new government's decisions by using mainly the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice it has taken over. The new government that has come to power on the strength of a military political coup with the help of the Soviet Army, although presenting itself as 'government of the people, for the people, by the people', immediately enforces, by most brutal means and ways, a totalitarian, anti-democratic system strictly following the Soviet model.



The Yalta Conference: Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Josef Stalin, after the deals, February 1945  
photo #: USA C-543



The Bulgarian Red Cross mission at the eastern front 1941-1945  
private archiv St. R.



Sofia immediately after 9 Septembre, 1944  
DA Archivi 69\_2965\_36



Marshal Tolbukhin and General Birjuzov at Sofia railway station  
DA Archivi 69\_2965\_36



## Terror from the Very Beginning

On the very first days after the 9 September coup, the communist party starts persecuting and killing large numbers of citizens pronounced by party activists as “enemies of the people”. The repressions follow summary proceedings executed by the so-called “punitive triads”. Over 30,000 Bulgarians get killed or ‘vanish without a trace’ over 40-50 days in September and October of 1944.

Vulko Chervenkov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, informs party leader Georgi Dimitrov in Moscow about the current mass repressions in the country, by telegram No. 10 dated 13 September 1944:

*“Fascist rule has fallen but the fight is still on.*

*During the first day of the revolution, we have squared accounts with the worst enemies we could lay hands on. Measures have been taken that the respective prosecution bodies deal with this problem from now on. Armed Party and Komsomol members are to be grouped into informal hit squads to carry out assignments of special importance.”*

On 17 October, 1944, Vulko Chervenkov has more to report to Georgi Dimitrov who is still in Moscow:

*“Traitors, provocateurs and enemies are being ruthlessly and mercilessly punished. The enemy has suffered a most severe blow. Our comrades have failed to decapitate the enemy during the first days after 9 September. That is why large-scale purges have been carried out over the last two weeks.”*

By means of mass repressions, murders, arrests, internment and other types of violence against citizens carried out by structures of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice.

The Bulgarian communist party deals ruthlessly with all its foes and potential political opponents.



Terror spreads throughout the country's entire economical, social and political life.

The Fatherland Front government passes a number of repressive Ordinances:

On 20 October, 1944

*“Ordinance for the purgation of teachers in all elementary schools, high schools and universities;”*

On 2 November, 1944

*“Ordinance on the appointment, dismissal and ranking of employees at the Ministry of the Interior and the provisional municipal administrations”*

On 6 November, 1944

*„Decree for modifications and addenda to the statute book for the public appointment, transfer and dismissal of high school teachers“*

On 14 March, 1945

*„Ordinance for modifications of the Ordinance for the alleviation of the housing shortages and the maintenance of order and safety in Sofia“*

Decrees, ordinances and regulations are issued to the effect of granting privileges to supporters of the new regime and at the same time limiting other citizens' rights

On 12 October, 1944

*„Ordinance for the temporary cancellation of qualifications as required by the Bill on the job descriptions, salaries and bonuses of state employees“*

On 24 October, 1944

*„Ordinance to grant writers, members of the Writers' Union, not having university degrees, the right to be appointed at state, municipal or public positions for which a university degree is required“*

On 29 April, 1945

*„Ordinance to support those who had suffered during their struggle against fascism and for the people's freedom“*

On 14 January, 1948, an enforced Act deprives citizens who had 'engaged in fascist activities' of their pensions. As a result of this Act, during the period from 9 September, 1944 until 3 March, 1945.

Pensions are discontinued to people convicted by the People's Tribunal people who "had vanished without trace", who are or are regarded by the authorities as having been involved in fascist activities. Inherited pensions for a number of state positions are also revoked. Retirement institutions become part of the repression apparatus depriving citizens of their rightful pensions although they had been paying their social security dues.

The entire administration, as well as the legal system, are fully replaced. Former guerrillas, political prisoners and party functionaries are appointed as judges and investigators although lacking the required education and professional experience. The concept of independent legal system is eliminated. All legal and administrative bodies become totally dependent on the Communist Party and the Fatherland Front committees.

On 19 March, 1945, the Neue Zürcher Zeitung comments:

*„The democratic values we normally recognize have been completely wiped out in Bulgaria...The right to life seems to be limited to the four groups of members and supporters of the Fatherland Front coalition: the communists, the left-wing agrarians, the socialists and the “Zveno” party members...”*

*(„Zveno“- group of military officers)*

### **Deportation of Germans from Bulgaria**

Article 1b of the Armistice signed by the Bulgarian government puts it under the obligation to deport all the subjects of Germany and its allies, living in the country. In compliance with these conditions, the Fatherland Front government should be deported a group of Germans to the appointed deportation station at the village of Pavel Banya. The Soviet Command insists that all Bulgarian citizens of German descent, including those married to Bulgarians, are deported although the Bulgarian Constitution does not allow for such actions.

*In 1943, Bulgaria has managed to save all its Jewish citizens from being deported to German concentration camps based on this very provision.*

On 28 December, 1944, Soviet Colonel General Biryuzov orders the Bulgarian Minister for Foreign Affairs to mobilize and deport to labour destinations in the Soviet Union “all capable Germans, citizens of Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria currently residing in Bulgaria”.



Further in his letter, Biryuzov specifies deportation stations for the Germans with the aim to gather them all together in Rousse by 1 January, 1945. Failure by any of them to show up results in trial by summary proceedings within the next 24 hours. Relatives or close friends trying to conceal Germans are to face repressive measures. Biryuzov requires that the Bulgarian government issues special notice forcing military and civic authorities to fully guarantee the convocation of all Germans living in Bulgaria and their deportation to the Soviet Union. Biryuzov demands a personal copy of the Bulgarian government's decision for the deportation.

Pressured by the commander-in-chief of Soviet troops in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers urgently issues a Decree that all labour-efficient German men aged 17-45 and all German women aged 18-30 gather together at the appointed deportation stations on 7 January, 1945. All Germans are then to be deported from Rousse to the Soviet Union on 10 January, 1945. The Bulgarian government makes an inquiry concerning the deportation of Germans with Bulgarian citizenship or of those married to Bulgarian citizens and receives the explicit answer that *"deported are to be all capable Germans, irrespective of their citizenship"*. The deportation of Germans living in Bulgaria is to continue even after the appointed deadline of 10 January, 1945.



### **Deportation of Whiteguard Russians**

Colonel General Biryuzov personally oversees the tracing down and deportation of Whiteguard Russians who had fought against the communists during and after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and found shelter in Bulgaria after their defeat. Russian military counter intelligence organization “Smersh” is assigned with the task to track them down. Bulgarian state security fully co-operates with them and the Russian military in this assignment.

### **Deportation of Tavrian Bulgarians**

In 1943 and 1944, a few thousand Bulgarians from Tavria, at the time in the Soviet Union, now in the Ukraine, manage to return to Bulgaria having suffered serious hardships and casualties. The Tavrian Bulgarians had been repressed and persecuted in Tavria because of Bulgaria’s alliance with Germany during the war. Immediately after the invasion of Bulgaria by the Soviet Army in 1944, on Stalin’s order, all Tavrian Bulgarians are deported back to the Soviet Union and treated as enemies of the Soviet system.

На новия партизан трябва да му се обясни, че той предстои да принадлежи на себе си и семейството си, а принадлежи на партията и в дългия да покортаван и живота си на осъществяване на поставените от нея задачи. На открити събрания в които се приемат партийни членове могат да представят в частни партизаните, които са били до нашата партия.

11. Необходимо е на тези, които ще бъдат приети за партийни членове, имената им да бъдат предварително уговорени в днешния род на партийното събрание.

Другаря, встъпването в новата партия е един от най-важните въпроси. Трябва да се вземат всички мерки да се ликвидира с несериозното отношение по този въпрос. Време е вече да проучим утвора и да го спазваме и в този пункт. Нека се забрани, че по въпроса за приемането в партията няма нечестен елемент, няма отговорност и както поръчителите, ръководното, така и цялата партийна организация.

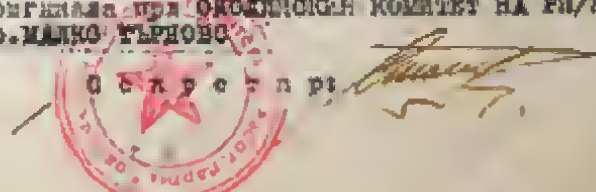
ОБЛАСТЕН КОМИТЕТ НА РП/К/- БУРГАС

ОРГОТЕЛ: ~~Орготел: Бургас~~

/п/дс. Йорданов

ВЕРНО, с оригинала при ОКОМНОСЕН КОМИТЕТ НА РП/К/-  
ГР. МАЛКО ТЪРНОВО

О с л о в о



„It must be made plain to the new party members that they no longer belong to themselves or to their families; they belong to the Party and it is their duty to be prepared to sacrifice their lives in carrying off the tasks assigned to them...” private archive St. R.



The Democracy newspaper, 5 Septembre, 1994:

Mircho Spasov, former member of

the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party:

„The Party delayed the installation of the People's Tribunal so we could eliminate more enemies; with the Tribunal they might get off safe - Ha-ha! I kept in touch with Comrade Zhivkov (Todor). He was in the NOVA (People's Liberation Revolutionary Army), in the basement of 'Slavjanska Bessedra'. When I went in there, everybody avoided me; they knew what I was at - it was a tough job, but somebody had to do the dirty work... We held them in the basement of the militia department and took them out late at night, loaded them onto trucks - 'Opel Blitz' - and... (they drove off) in the direction of Radomir. I was at 'Slavjanska Bessedra' at about 10 (p.m.) every day and it went on like this for three months - five trucks a night.“

DAArchivi



## УКАЗЪ

N. 288

ВЪ ИМЕТО НА НЕГОВО ВЕЛИЧЕСТВО ЦАРЯ

Ние, Регентитѣ на България

По заповѣдъ на Министри на прогласена отъ 9 октомври 1944 година, подъ N. 189.

Постановихме и постановяваме:

Да одобриятъ 9-то постановление на Министерския съветъ, взето въ Заседанието му отъ 6 октомври 1944 год., протоколъ N. 191, съ което на основание чл. 17 отъ Конституцията е приетъ следния

## НАРЕДБА-ЗАКОНЪ

за признаване правата на висшестн при заемане на държавна, общинска или обществена служба, на писателитѣ, членове на писателския съюзъ, които нѣматъ висше образование.

Членъ единственъ.

Признана се ценза висше образование при заемане държавна, общинска или обществена служба, на писателитѣ,

A decree, issued on 24 October, 1944, recognizing the right of members of the new "Writers' Union" without university degrees to be appointed to high positions in the central and local administration / photo F. K.



The caricature of Stalin by Raiko Aleksiev, the offence for which he was murdered

## The “People’s Tribunal”

On 24 September, 1944, Politburo approves an Ordinance for lawsuits by a “People’s Tribunal”. The Ordinance is adopted on 30 September, 1944.

Under the pretence that this Court can bring to trial all those responsible for dragging Bulgaria into the Second World War on the side of the Tripartite Pact, severely prosecuted are political activists, military, social and public figures, intellectuals, scientists, writers, journalists and many others.

The ultimate aim is to exterminate the elite of the nation thus preventing all possible organized resistance against the Soviet model imposed on Bulgaria by the communist party. The setting up of this special court is in serious violation of the acting Bulgarian Constitution and tramples down the basic principles of jurisdiction. Party activists with no professional qualifications are appointed as “people’s” prosecutors. All preliminary inquiries, legal proceedings and incriminations are in their hands.

Unjustly accused people are doomed in advance because of the initial presumption of being guilty. Sentences are final and cannot be appealed. Death sentences are carried out immediately. The property owned by convicted citizens is expropriated; their families are subjected to lifelong persecution and branded as “enemies of the people”. On a single night, 1-2 February, 1945, 3 regents, 33 government ministers, 67 members of parliament and 47 high ranking military are put on death row by the “People’s Tribunal” and shot by firing squad.



The Bulgarian “People’s Tribunal” sentences to death and executes 150 members of the supreme state authorities, as compared to 11 by the International Nuremberg Tribunal and 7 by the Far Eastern International Tribunal.

According to data reported by the chief “people’s” prosecutor to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on 3 July, 1945, the “People’s Tribunal” carried out 132 lawsuits and passed the following sentences:

Accused	11 122
Death sentences	2816 (2700 carried out)
Life imprisonment	1233
20 years close confinement	11
15 years close confinement	964
12 years close confinement	41
10 years close confinement	687
8 – 7 – 6 years close confinement	197
5 years close confinement	1006
3 years close confinement	379
2 years close confinement	318
1 year close confinement	724
1 year sentence on probation	668
Acquittals	1485
Stopped and suspended trials	386



**“People’s Tribunal” prosecutor**  
St. St. Cyril and Methodius  
National Library archives



**The accused regents, members of parliament, government members and senior officers on trial by the “People’s Tribunal”**  
St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library archives



**Prof. Alexander Stanishev, a medical professor of world renown, sentenced to death and shot last after he was forced, on 1 February 1945, to witness and certify the death of each of the other 150 victims.**  
St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library archives



**Dimitar Peshev, parliamentary Deputy Chairman, who took the initiative in preventing the deportation and extermination of the Bulgarian Jews (40,000 people); accused by the "People's Tribunal", among other things, of antisemitism.**  
St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library archives



**Trifon Kunev, writer, accused and found guilty of the crime of being the author of a series of satires entitled "Small, miniscule, like camels"**  
St.St. Cyril and Methodius National Library archives



## Doing away with the opposition parties

The sprouting of parliamentary opposition started as early as November 1944 with the very first signs of discord between communists and representatives of the other parties sitting on the Fatherland Front dominated government.

On the requisition of all non-communist parties and with a decision of the Allied Control Committee, the upcoming parliamentary elections on 26 August, 1945 are postponed. This is the first victory of the opposition against communist party dictatorship.

### Political parties in legal opposition

Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union  
Chairman Nikola Petkov  
party newspaper "People's Agrarian Banner"

Bulgarian Social Democratic Party  
Secretary Kosta Lulchev  
party newspaper "Free Nation"

Democratic Party  
Chairmen Nikola Moushanov and Alexander Ghirghinov  
party newspaper "Zname"(Banner)

Radical Party  
Independent intellectuals' Opposition group  
led by Prof. Petko Stainov

Early in June 1946, the leaders of the Bulgarian communist party pay a visit to Moscow and receive instructions to take drastic actions towards the communization of Bulgaria and to do away with the opposition. The Bulgarian Social Democratic party receives the first blow when party leader Krustyo Pastuhov is arrested on 26 June, 1946, sentenced to 5 years in prison and killed by strangulation while serving time. Tzvetan Ivanov, the editor of BSDP's "Free Nation" newspaper, is also arrested.

The elections for a Grand National Assembly are held on 27 October, 1946. Despite the terror exerted upon people, numerous arrests of opposition party activists and massive election fraud, the legal opposition wins 101 out of 465 seats and sets up two parliamentary opposition groups: BZNS-Nikola Petkov (the Bulgarian Agrarian People's party) and BSDP (the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party).

After the Peace Treaty with Bulgaria is signed on 10 February, 1947 in Paris, the communist party openly begins persecution and repressions against the leaders and members of the opposition parties. On 5 June, 1947, Nikola Petkov, the leader of the united opposition, loses his MP immunity. He is sentenced to death and executed in the Sofia Central Prison.

The White House, 16 September 1952

Speaking in connection with the 5th anniversary of Nikola Petkov's execution, United States President Harry S. Truman comments:

*"The American people and many other nations will never forget the prosecution and the murder of Nikola Petkov in 1947. His courageous struggle against communist totalitarian rule in Bulgaria will never be forgotten. His death made the meaning of the struggle he waged against tyranny much clearer to the entire world..."*

According to Bulgarian State Security records, in September 1947 all opposition party activists are placed under surveillance. By October 1947, all leaders of the so-called bourgeois parties have been banished from Sofia and put under surveillance by State Security agents, among them Nikola Moushanov, Stoycho Moushanov, Alexander Ghirghinov, Prof. Venelin Ganev, Atanas Burov, Petko Staynov, Christo Manafov, Slavi Chorbazhigoshev, Stefan Gubidelnikov, Boris Panchev, Dimitar Vurbanov, Georgi Panayotov. During 1947, 721 members of the opposition parties are sent to forced labour camps.

On 14 November, 1947, a trial is staged against writer Trifon Kunev on the accusation that he has published a collection of short satirical stories against the regime: "I decided to leave behind a lasting document about the resistance movement of the Bulgarian people... The resisting power of Bulgarians against the enslavement depriving them of human dignity is enormous..."

(from "Cramped And Puny Like Baby Camels", 1946)



After the State Security have succeeded to brutally deal away with the democratic legal opposition parties, they direct their efforts towards the liquidation of the Bulgarian high ranking military officers and the disbandment of patriotic organizations.

During July and August of 1946, the State Security stage trials against the legionaries (members of the Bulgarian National Legion youth organization in Bulgaria until 1944), considered by the communist authorities their worst enemies.

Out of the 68 legionaries on trial, 13 are sentenced to death and the rest to various terms of confinement.

*“The Maritza River washes ashore dead bodies of Bulgarians. These bodies, dragged by the river from Bulgaria, are many in number. Most probably they are the bodies of Bulgarian “reactionaries”, massacred a few days before the elections to scare the population into voting for the communist front”, the “Embros” Greek daily comments from Athens on 25 Nov. 1945.*

*“On the eve of the Bulgarian elections, a multitude of Greek citizens and some British officials witnessed the Maritza River’s muddy waters carry along a huge pile of dead bodies towards the Augean . The reports to the fact are kept on record”, the “Estia” daily of Athens reports on 19 February, 1946.*

## Sovietization

On 4 December, 1947, Bulgaria's Grand National Assembly in which the Bulgarian Communist Party has absolute majority adopts the "Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria". The new Constitution completely changes the model of state government, replaces division of powers with the unity of state power under the absolute monopoly of the communist party.

*"The new Bulgarian Constitution is an almost exact copy of Stalin's Constitution... Some provisions open the way to arbitrary power and to disregard of people's rights and freedoms despite the conditions of the peace treaties."* Gazette du Lausanne daily, Lausanne, 27 December, 1947

The Communist Party uses the judiciary system as a tool to impose dictatorship and develops a repressive legislation to be applied against its political adversaries and opponents. People are subjected to staged political trials ending in death sentences or different periods of time in prison, detention in labour camps, or forceful resettlement. All the "property belongs to the people" is proclaimed the foundation principle of the country's economy. Under this motto the government undertakes to liquidate all ownership of industrial enterprises, means of production and farmland.

The Soviet model is imposed on the country's administration, army, economic system and cultural life. Soviet subject matter becomes a must for all the arts.

*“All Bulgarian bookstores are crammed with and offer nothing else but the works of Lenin, Stalin, Marx, Russian books and books about the Soviet Union. Stalin and Molotov’s portraits are everywhere, hanging next to those of the Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov...”*

*Young members of some organization are sitting in a hall studying the Soviet national anthem which is now Bulgaria’s’ second national anthem.”*

*“To Vima” (“The Tribune”), Athens, 8 April, 1947*

*“One cannot help feeling that the shadow of fear and Moscow’s hand of death are hanging over each and every Bulgarian, not excluding the communist leaders,” reads a report by British Ambassador to Bulgaria Anthony Lambert dated 2 January, 1959.*

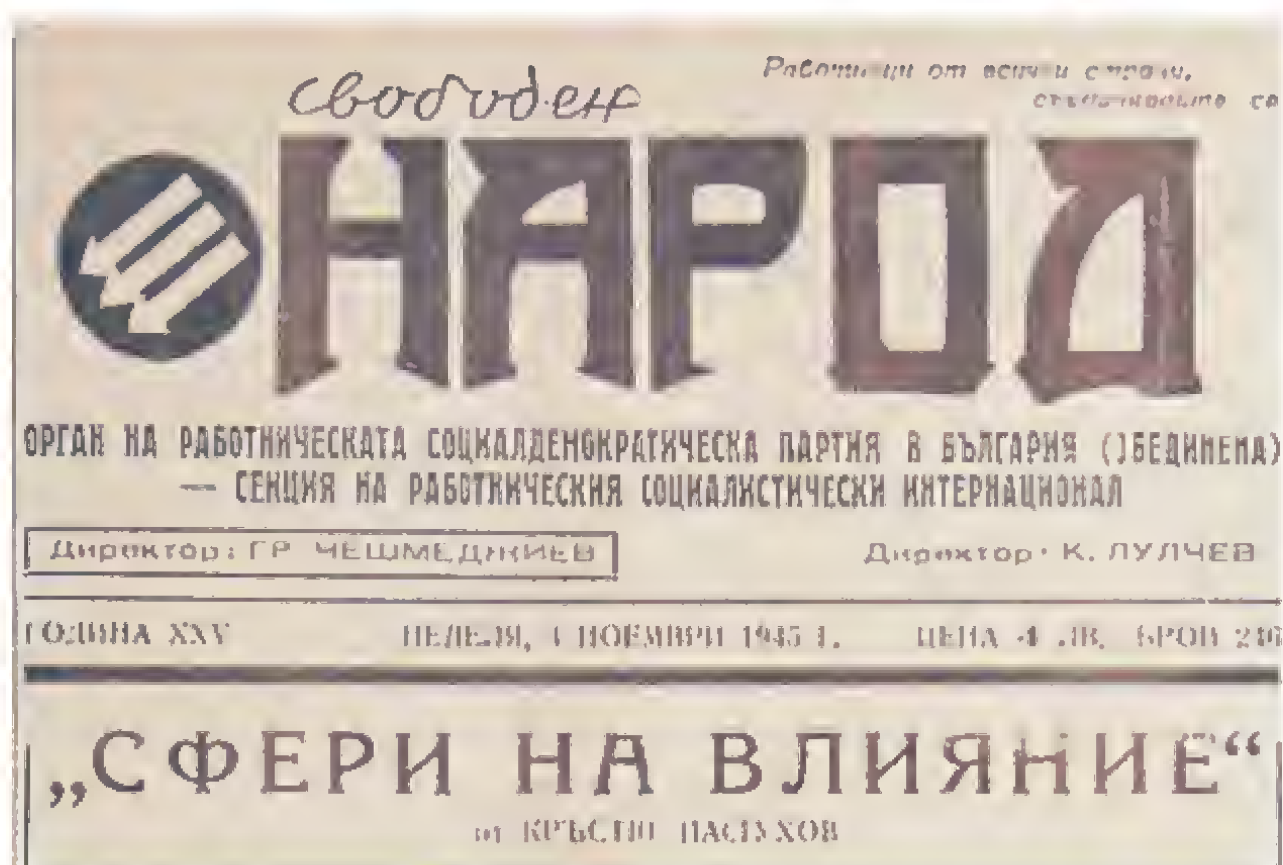
Servility and imitation of the Soviet model stay put with Bulgarian Communist Party leaders even after their party officially differentiates itself from Stalin’s personality cult. After his death in 1953, events are pushed to the absolute edge when Todor Zhivkov, first secretary of the party, tables a proposal to discuss Bulgaria’s eventual incorporation in the Soviet Union at a plenary session of the party’s central committee in July 1963. In October 1963, Todor Zhivkov reports the idea to Soviet party leader Nikita Khrushchev and presents the notion as having been already discussed by the Bulgarian communist party leadership. (All 167 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party have voted in favour of the proposal)





*„Свободна, демократична и мощна България“*

a caricature from an opposition newspaper, 1945:  
“Free, democratic and mighty Bulgaria” photo F.K.



The Svobodnen Narod opposition newspaper;  
“spheres of influence” - an article by Kr. Pastukhov, photo F.K.



A propaganda campaign for the new soviet-controlled regime, private archives St. R.



The Zname newspaper, an organ of the Democratic party, 1947: "America will not recognize the elections (for a constituent assembly) and the present government", photo F. K.

## Forced Collectivization of Bulgarian agriculture

In contrast with other countries of Eastern and Central Europe caught in the sphere of Soviet influence after the Second World War, until 1944 Bulgarian farms have always been small or medium-sized and privately owned. There is hardly a peasant family that does not own some land. Until 1946, 57.9% of the peasants own from 12.5 up to 50 acres of land. Only about 3.9% of the people own from 50 to 125 acres of land.

Characteristics of Bulgarian farms in terms of  
land ownership during the 1930s

Farm Size (acres)	Percentage of all farms	Characteristics of the farms
up to 2.5	11.78 %	very small
from 2.5 to 5	12.31 %	very small
from 5 to 12.5	32.86 %	small
from 12.5 to 25	28.13 %	medium
from 25 up to 75	14.30 %	big
more than 75	0.67 %	large-scale



In April 1945, the new Fatherland Front authorities adopt the Ordinance for the setting up of Collective Farms and start enforcing a complete collectivization by means of the most brutal physical and moral harassment, assaults and killings. They appropriate the peasants' land and their farming equipment (ploughs, ox carts and horse carts), farming machinery (tractors, threshing and winnowing machines), draft (oxen and horses) and other animals (cows and sheep)

The plenary session of the central committee of the Bulgarian communist party held on 12 and 13 July, 1948, endorses the Soviet model for Bulgaria's economic development and calls for stepping up the struggle against the Kulaks (the better-off peasants), and the class struggle in the villages in general. The war of the Bulgarian communists waged against the Bulgarian peasants reaches its highest point in the years 1950 - 1954.

In 1958, arable land already in possession of the collective farms accounts for 92% of all such land, which in turn affects about 93% of all households in the country.

## Yablanitsa Village Council Ordinance No.102

On 27 November 1950, on the basis of a decision passed by the Bulgarian Communist Party Committee of the village of Yablanitsa, Teteven district, the following persons are proclaimed to be Kulaks and enemies of the people:

1. *Dimiter Mikov Markov and his sons*

2. *Dako Nejkov Jakimov*

...

10. *Dako Vutkov and his sons*

*The Village Council and other state institutions' services in the village will not be available to any of the persons listed above. Henceforth, they may not go to the local restaurants or pubs or buy anything at the village shops except salt. Failure to comply will be punished most severely.*

*Copies of the present ordinance shall be posted in public places and handed to the staff of restaurants, pubs and shops.*

*Signed, Chairman Ivan Tsanov Ivanov“*

The Bulgarian peasants, who have for centuries been owners of farm land and livestock, are reduced to landless farming hands in kolkhoz-type collective farms run by local party activists.

Co-operative management of farming land in Bulgaria dates back to the 1920s. By 1935, in Bulgaria there are already 1,239 co-operative farms, all of them to be dismantled by the communist regime after 9 September, 1944 in favour of the Kolkhoz model imposed on Bulgarian agriculture via the so-called collective farms. By the end of the 1950s, “socialist” Bulgaria, a country with farming traditions and with predominantly rural population until WW II, no longer has any private farms. Consequently, this rural transformation inflicts severe demographic, economic and social damage to the entire Bulgarian society.

number of collective farms and of households in them,  
1944-1957

year	number of farming cooperatives	number of households
1944	17	649
1945	382	34 000
1946	480	41 000
1947	549	46 000
1948	1100	124 000
1949	1601	156 000
1950	2501	502 000
1951	2739	582 000
1952	2747	553 000
1953	2744	569 000
1954	2723	569 000
1955	2735	591 000
1956	3100	911 000
1957	3202	1 017 000
1959	3972	1 290 000





Deserted village houses, photo St. R.



socialist realism art – Premier and Party leader  
Vulko Chervenkov,  
private archive

## Expropriation of private property in industry, banking and trade

In the spring of 1946, the Bulgarian communist party launches a broad campaign to endorse the “dictatorship of the proletariat” by liquidation of private property in industry, crafts and trades.

Parallel to the staging of a number of political trials, on 8 September, 1946, the Confiscation of Property “Illegally Acquired through Profiteering” Act is adopted. Article No.1 of the Act states that all movable and immovable property, money and shares acquired after 1935 fall into this category and shall be confiscated by the state. “Profiteering” implies all business and financial activities.

The purpose of the Act is the expropriation of the property - factories, businesses and all means of production of persons disliked by the regime, “*who have to be destroyed economically and financially*”, states Alexander Girginov, one of the leaders of the opposition Democratic Party.

*“The nationalization has been one of the most important steps taken by the people’s democratic power in order to transform the capitalist property into socialist”,* says Georgi Dimitrov, leader of the Bulgarian communist party and secretary general of the Komintern, the communist international organization.

By the end of 1947, the single-party system, a carbon copy of the Soviet model, is totally enforced; the Bulgarian communists can now carry on with their program to fully liquidate private property in industry as well.



On 18 December, 1947, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party passes a draft bill for the nationalization of the private, industrial and mining enterprises. The Grand National Assembly passes the bill on 23 December, 1947. According to its provisions, industrial enterprises in metal working, mining, textile, construction and chemical industries, breweries, creamery and vegetable oil factories and others shall be nationalized. The same applies to all businesses' financial resources, bank deposits and assets.

Preparations for the process of nationalization are conducted in absolute secrecy. On 22 December, 1947, even before the new Nationalization Bill is adopted, the communists begin the expropriation of businesses. The process has been simplified: the owner of the business has to hand in the keys to his safe and to his office to the representatives of the Party that suddenly appear at his doorstep.

He then signs a general statement that he submits his business to the "people's government" and is then allowed to pick up his coat and walk out. Then, the factory loudspeakers announce to all people that the communist party and the government's decision for the expropriation of this particular business has been carried through. Owners are removed from their industrial, banking and trade enterprises and from the positions they have held. Not only their working capital and bank deposits, but also most of their personal property, houses, jewellery, cars and other belongings are expropriated.

On 25 December, 1947, a Bill is passed imposing a state monopoly over banking: as a result, 31 Bulgarian and foreign banks are nationalized.

After the nationalization, market economy in Bulgaria is completely ousted. A new type of bureaucratic economy is introduced instead, which leaves no room for entrepreneurship, the management of enterprises is entrusted to the care of party activists. This new system is imposed on the country's entire economic life.

Not one private enterprise is left in Bulgaria, not even one privately owned small crafts shop, or any other shop whatsoever.

The campaign of expropriation also encompasses the homes of certain categories of citizens. During 1948, "housing committees set up by "the people's" (municipal) councils, begin 'crowding up together' owners of urban properties by accommodating in their flats or houses communist party functionaries, clerks, employees and other persons loyal to the new regime, coming from the villages or smaller towns. The same has previously been done with the relatives of people who had been pronounced 'enemies of the people' and sent to the punitive labour camps, or killed or interned.

The Bill for the Urban House Property provides for the expropriation, in full or in part, of well-off citizens' houses, flats, villas, offices etc.



# ЕКСПРОПРИЯЦИЯТ

По частна инициатива в Народното Събрание е внесен законопроект за национализирането на подземните богатства в България. От самото заглавие на законопроекта е видна неговата главна цел: всички досега съществуващи частни мини и предприятия за откриване и използване на подземни богатства у нас да бъдат отчуждени в полза на държавата.

Интересни са мотивите, които придружават този законопроект.

Вносителите смятат, че всички частни мини и минни предприятия трябва да се отнемат в полза на държавата, понеже в тях не било вложен човешки труд. Очевидно авторите на законопроекта са изпуснали изпредвид, че за създаването на всяко минно предприятие са необходими трудът и капитала, и предприемчивостта и изкуството. Откриване на една мина на подземни богатства и нейното използване е един стопроцентов принос за народа и народното стопанство.

Също така и аргументът на вносителите че държавата единствено може да инвестира големите средства, необходими за разработването и производството на минните предприятия, е поне при днешното положение неубедителен.

Защото официалните данни говорят, че по настоящем държавата притежава повече от 9/10 от подземните богатства на страната (държавни периметри 6401, частни 1251; държавни концесии 39, частни 119), но поради ограничени парични средства и липса на инициатива и стопанска разпоредителност, 78% отъ периметрите на държавата още не са проучени и 13 от държавните концесии бездействуват напълно. Това показва, че държавата има още много да работи върху сноза, което притежава и сигурно няма нужди от нови обекти. Това заключение се потвърждава и от сведенията, които обществото има за работите в мини Перник. Преди всичко тия най-голями и най-важни мини в България, особено в днешния момент, трябва да привлекат големите грижи и средствата на държавата, за да се турне ред с тях и да се избави населението и дър-

An opposition newspaper headline:



# А СЕ РАЗШИРЯВА

жавата от хаоса, който върлува там и има вероятност да върлува и в бъдеще.

Частните минни и минни предприятия, които според законопроекта ще бъдат отчуждени и заплатени, са вложили за разработване и експлоатиране за сгради, машини, технически съоръжения и за подготовка на обектите грамадни суми, които изчислени според индекса на посъпняването ще възлезат днес на няколко милиарда лева. Държавата трябва да заплати не само тая грамадна сума за обезщетение, но и да продължава да разходва много милиони за поддържането и развитието на новоотчуждените частни минни предприятия, без да разчита нито тя, нито народното стопанство на някаква особена полза за себе или за народа. Напротив, държавата само ще се обремения, а повечето предприятия ще бъдат обречени на застой.

При това нека се има предвид, че държавните минни предприятия дават повече от 80% от общото производство на полезни изкопаеми, а частните — под 20% от общото минно производство на страната.

Тогава какъв смисъл има да се прокарва подобна реформа, която ще направи страната и населението само по-бедни и очевидно ще влоши стопанското положение?

Но изглежда, че днешните реформатори в България вървят по свои пътища. Тяхният път е пътът на демагогията, на залъгването обществото с фантастични миражи.

Тяхната цел е да прокарват своите партизанско-партийни заблуди, па макар и от това да страда и народа и държавата.

Единствено уместно е държавата да съсредоточи своето внимание върху многобройните свои минни обекти, да ги проучи, да ги усъвършенства за задоволяване нуждите на страната от руди и въглища.

А по отношение на частните минни предприятия държавата трябва, поне за сега, да запази своя контрол, чрез който тя да ги насочва към по-голямо и по-целесъобразно развитие и производство.

Страната ни е доста обедняла. Нека поне от тук нататък не ставаме причина за нови стопански разорвания.

“The expropriation is expanding”, private archive

## Persecution of the church

German philosopher Marx has called religion “*the opium of the people*” This statement is a cornerstone of his followers’ ideology.

A staggering example of the communist party’s attitude towards the church and religion is the 16 April, 1925 blast at “Sveta Nedelya”, a cathedral in Sofia that leaves 213 people dead under the ruins and 500 injured men, women and children.

Among those massacred without trial and sentence during the first days after the communist coup d’état on 9 September 1944, many are priests ‘guilty’ of performing their church duties and of preaching Christian morality. The names of over 100 murdered Christian Orthodox priests have surfaced on that macabre list together with Rabbi Isaac B. Levi, Muslim priest Mohamed Rashidov, Armenian-Gregorian priest Garabed S. Karadzhiyan and Protestant pastor Stephan Todorov.

On 16 February 1949, a “Religion Act” is published, closely following the corresponding Soviet piece of legislation,. The Act introduces complete control over all religious institutions, forbids religious services outside churches and confiscates all church property. Students get expelled for attending services or even for stepping inside a church; clerks and state employees face career failure or get fired if seen in church.

From 25 February up to 9 March 1949 the communist authorities stage a lawsuit against 15 protestant pastors. Four of them get life sentences.



On 11 November, 1952, at 23:30, at Sofia Central Prison House, 3 priests from the Order of the Assumption: Father Kamen Vichev, Father Pavel Dzhidzhov and Father Yosafat Shishkov and the Bulgarian Passionist bishop Monseigneur Evgeni Bosilkov, all previously sentenced to death, are executed by a firing squad.

During 1984, by a decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the authorities carry out a campaign to change by compulsion the names of the Bulgarian Muslims.

Parallel with the legislative and administrative restrictions, the Bulgarian secret services exert further pressure on the clergy by recruiting many of them as agents or informers. Department One of the State Security, in charge of the “struggle against the counter-revolution”, has a “Clergy and Sects” section carrying out special operations aimed at the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations. During 1949, this particular section conducts 20 active underground operations, 24 preliminary researches for such operations and 240 surveillance/reporting operations carried out by a total of 339 agents. By 1981, 278 out of the 5,000 agents at Department Six of the Bulgarian State Security conduct operations targeted at the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations. By 1989 which marks the end of the communist regime, that number has doubled.



## Forcible Re-settling

The communist authorities resort to punitive and preventive measures against citizens and their relatives considered to be adversaries of the new regime by forcefully resettling them from the capital, big cities or border regions to remote villages and small settlements. The resettled citizens are not allowed to leave their new places of residence. Intellectuals, dismissed officers, industrialists, businessmen, lawyers out of favour and people living in border areas considered to be 'unreliable' by the regime are also resettled.

According to a joint report by the Speaker of the House and the Minister of the Interior addressed to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, during the period from 9 September 1944 until August 1953 7,025 families with a total of 24,624 family members have been removed from the big cities. The actual number is larger. Over the same period, 2,548 families with a total of 5,075 family members are resettled from Sofia alone; 4,208 families with 18,315 family members are resettled from border regions and district centers.

<i>Reasons for resettlement</i>	<i>Number of resettled families</i>	<i>Number of resettled family members</i>
Relatives of 'renegades' (who have escaped to the West)	2 397	9 739
Considered 'enemies of the people' and a threat to the regime if living in big cities or borderline regions	4 359	13 651
Other reasons	169	1 224
total	7 025	24 624

In March 1953, Georgi Tzankov, Minister of the Interior, issues a strictly confidential Ordinance:

*“With the purpose of purging the big cities and border regions from hostile characters and in order to disrupt contacts between renegades and their families*

*I command:*

*In most strict confidence, preparations are to begin for the resettlement of the families of renegades and non-returners living in the cities of Sofia, Bourgas, Stalin (Varna), Plovdiv and border regions.*

*They are to be confined to settlements in the interior of the country.*

*For the purpose, the superior officers of Interior Ministry stations in Sofia and the district centers are to identify all members of renegades’ families in the abovementioned regions and submit proposals for their internment by 20 March, 1953 at the latest...”*

**Resettlement of people from the capital and the bigger cities are renewed during the Hungarian uprising in 1956.**

resettled families' social status	number	%
middle class peasants	2418	37.4
bourgeois origin	1757	26.7
poor peasants	784	11.9
Kulaks – Well-off peasants	710	10.8
middle class townsfolk	475	7.2
employees	210	3.2
working class origin	93	1.4
craftsmen	78	1.1
poor townsfolk	65	1
total	6590	100



**The Sv. Nedelja Cathedral in Sofia, destroyed after the communist terrorist attack on 16 April, 1925**  
private archive



93

*Димитар Коларов*

Възлагаме, Димитар Коларов, че не приема  
офертата, ни от службата сигурност  
свързана с асепта и сигурност  
за безопасност на името, изследването  
свързана сигурност.  
Забелявам, че при пост в нашата страна  
винаги, за което съм готов в държавна  
сигурност, като в ролята: сигурна, бърза  
нашата сигурност.

19.X.1949

A Declaration, signed by Dimitar A. Kolarov, rejecting the offer of the state security apparatus. to be recruited as an informer private archive

**РЕШЕНИЕ**

Препас

В ИМЕТО НА НАРОДА И НАРОДНАТА РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ

Жилищната комисия при Турновския градски народен съвет в откритото си заседание на 22. IX. 1951 г. в състав:

Председател: Т. Кръстев

Членове: 1) А. Цанков  
2) Т. Вилков

Днес на 22 септ. 1951 г. като разгледа жилищното дело № 2747 1951 г.

РЕШИ:

Поставя Димитар Аспарухов Коларов в една стая, кухня, килер и мазе живее в гр. Турново в стая от помещението се състои град на ул. мисага Катича съседни Васил Стефанов и Ив. Тихов

Решението е окончателно и не може да се обжалва.

Председател: Г-н Т. Кръстев

Членове: 1) Г-н А. Цанков  
2) Г-н Т. Вилков

Директор — Секретар: Г-н Манасеф



A document testifying to the internment of Dimitar A. Kolarov's family: one dated 22.09.1951, reading: "In the name of the People and the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Housing Committee of the Turnovo Municipal Council has taken the decision...to accommodate Dimitar A. Kolarov in the region of Katchiza in one room, a kitchen, a closet and basement.

The decision is final and there is no appeal."

private archive

## Underground armed resistance of the “Goriyani”

With the establishment of the communist regime in Bulgaria, during the autumn of 1944, parallel with the opposition parties' legal struggle against the new regime, an underground armed resistance movement emerges and gathers force. The movement is called “Goriyani” (“Forest dwellers”) and its members come from different layers of the Bulgarian society, mostly from the rural areas: middle-class and even poor farmers vehemently opposing the expropriation of their land.

By the end of 1947, the peasants account for 47% of those involved in the resistance movement in Bulgaria; that percentage increases to peak at 70% during 1950-1951. Once the opposition parties have been done away and in the course of the mass collectivization of the land and the nationalization of private urban property in the government's efforts to strictly follow the Soviet model, the Goriyani movement spreads all over the country. In the 1950s there is hardly any mountainous region in the country without armed Goriyani detachments active in it and supported by large numbers of local people.

The regime's life and death struggle to crush the armed resistance produces the first internal military battalions by the end of 1948. By October 1950, the battalions are already 10: two in Sofia and one in each of the cities of Plovdiv, Bourgas, Varna, Stara Zagora, Yambol, Blagoevgrad and Belogradchik. With a Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the internal military troops are re-formed into a division and their number increases accordingly.



They are “to be trained and to act like the Soviet Union’s internal forces” and should be “loyal to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party to the death”. They and the Bulgarian State Security forces are assigned to fight and destroy the Goriyani detachments and to do away with the entire resistance movement in Bulgaria.

In 1951, the State Security reports about 176 underground resistance groups, 47 of them in Sofia. On 1 October, 1951, 19 young men are killed in an action against a Goriyani detachment in the Turiya forest in the Kazanluk region. At about the same time, in the Iskar river pass, State Security troops are fighting two Goriyani detachments numbering 30 and 40 respectively.

The “Goriyanin” (singular for Goriyani) radio station broadcasts from April 1951 until October 1962. It becomes the voice of the Bulgarian people’s resistance movement against the communist dictatorship and the Sovietization of the country.

Excerpt from a Radio Goriyanin broadcast in May, 1955:

*“This is the Goriyanin radio station, the voice of the Bulgarian resistance...*

*Waste no time, get ready, brothers,  
For the day of freedom yet to come  
Freedom from the Bolshevik slavery  
Freedom for our holy Motherland...*

During those long years of armed resistance, the Bulgarian people’s morale is boosted by the hope that the international democratic community and the Great Powers may appreciate the losses they suffer in the unequal struggle against the communist regime forced upon them and interfere to help them prevail in their fight for freedom.



## Underground Groups and Organizations

- “Underground National Patriotic Forces”, an armed organization of 30 people, some of them students at the 2nd Sofia High School for boys set up in 1945 and led by Peter Peychev
- “Underground Anti-Bolshevik Organization” set up by young people in the town of Kyustendil in 1945
- Underground organization in the Pirdop district set up by Stoycho Christov Karadjov in 1947
- “National Christian Cross”, an underground organization set up on 27 August, 1947, in Imaret Dere (Haidushki Poliyani), Smolyan region, led by Angel Stefanov, with some 300 members. By December 1947, the organization sets up two Goriyani detachments: “The Detachment of Death” and “The Flying Detachment”
- “People’s Unity Nation-wide Movement”, set up in Sofia in 1948
- “National Movement for Combat”, set up in the village of Slivnitsa, near Sofia, in 1948
- “Nikola Petkov” Underground District Agrarian Organization, set up in 1948, led by Peter Mesakov, Tzanko Georgiev and Boyan Popov, to operate in the region in Trun
- Youth Organization for Struggle against the “People’s Power”, set up in Silistra, 1949
- Underground Military Youth Organization for Armed Struggle, set up in Haskovo in 1949
- “People’s Defense” Underground Group, set up in Stara Zagora in 1949
- Armed Legionary Group (the group carried out several attentats), set up in Plovdiv in 1949
- Youth’s Underground Group, set up in the village of Archar in 1949
- “Free Bulgaria” Underground organization, set up by Lyudmil Kunov in 1949

- “Union of Free Warriors” Underground Organization, set up in the Pazardzhik region in 1949 to counteract against the forcible land appropriation. Its 280 members set up an armed Goriyani detachment.
- “Underground Patriotic Organization”, set up in the Trun region in 1949, led by Nikola Yordanov – Gudzho, who organizes and leads a small 80-member armed Goriyani detachment. His detachment grows to 450 members and organized in 30 fighting groups covers 40 villages of the Breznik region and 10 villages in the Trun district.
- “Bulgarian Resistance Movement”, an underground organization with some 200 members, set up in the autumn of 1950, on the initiative and under the leadership of Blagoy Zlatanski, shot by a firing squad in 1953. The organization maintains close contacts with the Goriyani movement from the Dupnitsa region
- “Orange Party”, an underground organization in the Yambol district, set up by poor and middle class peasants in 1950. The organization sets up structures in 21 villages.
- “District Agrarian Center No.1”, an underground organization in the Rousse region set up in that city in the autumn of 1950.
- Underground Organization of Samokov, set up in the autumn of 1950 in the region of Samokov and Kyustendil, revealed by the regime during the autumn of 1951 and its leaders sentenced to death.
- Committee for Resistance, an underground organization in the Sliven region, set up in 1950, led by Kosta Deykov, who set up a Goriyani detachment. The Committee sets up groups in 19 villages in the Sliven, Kazanluk and Nova Zagora districts.



- Agrarian Youth Union, an underground organization set up in Sofia in 1950 to fight the regime.
- “Bulgarian Resistance Movement”, an underground organization set up in Sofia in 1950.
- Underground Organization of Samokov, 68 strong, set up during the autumn of 1950 by Kiril H. Besov, Atanas B. Batashki and Vasil Mishev to take up arms against and overthrow the regime.
- “Call for Freedom”, a young people’s underground organization, set up in the summer of 1950 in the Ihtiman region under the leadership of Slavcho Zashev, who is sentenced to death and shot by a firing squad in 1952. His brother Assen Zashev spends many years in prison and labour camps.
- “Youth Organization Against the Fatherland Front”, set up in Sofia and Plovdiv in 1951.
- “Partisan Students”, an underground organization of the expelled students, set up in Sofia in 1951.
- “I am Bulgarian”, an underground organization set up in the Plovdiv region during 1951.
- “The Goriyani Bulgarian Resistance Movement”, an underground organization set up on 15 April, 1951 in Plovdiv. The organization sets itself the task of training armed underground resistance groups. During the same year, the organization sets up four Goriyani detachments: in Kazanluk, Karlovo and Assenovgrad districts and the region of Parvenets near Plovdiv.
- Map (major Nikola Petkov Agrarian Union underground organizations) – Collection of documents No.5, стр. 153





Easter greetings card of the resistance: Freedom, Independence, Democracy vs. Communism and Dictatorship, MVR (Ministry for the Interior) Museum; photo F. K.

## БЪЛГАРСКИ МЛАДЕЖИ,

НИЕ НЕ СМЕ ГОСПОДАРИ НА СЪДБАТА СИ!  
НАШЕТО БЪДАЩЕ ЗАВИСИ ОТ НУЖДИТЕ И  
ЗАПОВЕДИТЕ НА КРЕМЪЛ!

Принудени сме да работим каквото и къде  
комунистите ни позволят!

Четем само това, което комунистическата цензура  
ни разреши!

По принуда слушаем само комунистически лъжи  
и празнословия!

Комунистите се опитват да ограничат и контроли-  
рат разума ни!

ЧРЕЗ МАСОВО ВМУШАВАНЕ ТЕ СЕ СТРЕМЯТ  
ДА НИ НАКАРАТ ДА МИСЛИМ КАТО КОМУ-  
НИСТИ!

## ЩЕ ПОЗВОЛИМ ЛИ ТОВА?

Ще се поддадем ли на престъпните комунистически похвати  
без "противодействие и съпротива"?

Български младежи!

Да запазим мисълта си свободна! Не приемайте  
нищо безкритично!

Стрежете се всекога да проникнете през громките комуни-  
стически фрази и открийте истинските цели и планове на  
пъкления комунизъм!

Началото на края на комунизма ще дойде, когато ние осъз-  
наем силата си!

Не забравяйте, че комунистите се боят най-много от мла-  
дежта на поробените народи. Те знаят, че ако ние реши-  
телно застанем против тях, те са загубени!

Ние, свободолюбивата младеж, не ще оставим  
България под болшевишко робство. Ние ще се  
борим за щастлив и човешки живот и утрешна  
свободна България.

Младежи и девойки, БЪДАЩЕТО НА БЪЛГАРИЯ ЛЕЖИ  
В НАШИТЕ РЪЦЕ!

212  
ИРБ 7-В-14

An appeal of the Gorjani underground resistance force  
to the Bulgarian youth,  
MVR Museum; photo F. K.

## Armed Goriyani Detachments

- Goriyani Detachment from the Godech district, set up in 1947 under the leadership of Todor Dimitrov Filipov
- Sixth Pirin Detachment, an armed detachment set up at the beginning of 1947 under the leadership of Gerasim Todorov. In order to achieve greater maneuverability, the detachment splits into two smaller detachments. The second detachment is led by Kiril Bengazov. After the two detachments are defeated, 84 of their members and supporters are taken to court. Twelve people are sentenced to death.
- The Pazardjik district Detachment – active until the end of 1949
- Three Goriyani detachments are organized in 1949 in the Pirin mountain region
- First Sliven Detachment, a well-armed Goriyani detachment of 28 people under the leadership of Penyo Christov Michov, destroyed in mid-November, 1950
- Second Sliven Detachment, set up in April 1951 under the leadership of Georgi Marinov Turpanov with some 150 members including a few women. The detachment is active in the Sliven Mountains. Regular military troops and internal army units under the direct command of the Minister of the Interior, Anton Yugov are garrisoned in the region to crush the resistance.
- Gorjanitcheta „Rilski Bojtz“ in Dupnitza Gebildet 1950 unter der Führung von Nikola Hajdutov, aktiv in den Bezirken Dupnitza und Gorna Dzhumaja
- A detachment in the Yambol district, operating in the spring of 1950



- Ruse Detachment - an armed Goriyani detachment set up in Ruse in September 1950 by 8 people. The detachment grows to 40 members and has a great number of supporters, active in the villages of the Ruse district. By May-June 1951 the detachment is destroyed.
- "Rila Warriors" set up 1950 under the leadership of Nikola Haydutov, active in the region of Dupnitsa and Gorna Dzhumaya
- Stara Zagora armed Detachment, set up in October 1950. By the end of 1951 the detachment numbers 145 underground members.
- The "Goriyani Bulgarian Resistance Movement" set up at the beginning of April 1951, mainly by students from Plovdiv, under the leadership of Petko Kidikov. The organization has 46 members including 3 women and some runaway soldiers. During August, the organization sets up a second detachment under the leadership of Georgi Komitov.
- Kazanluk Goriyani Detachment set up by 8 people in April 1951 in the surroundings of the village of Stryama. When the number of members increases considerably, the detachment splits into 3 smaller detachments, each of which has its own region for operations in the Kazanluk district.
- Karlovo Detachment, set up at the beginning of 1951 in the region of Plovdiv under the leadership of two brothers Atanas Batalov and Ivan Batalov from in the village of Karavelovo, Karlovo district. The detachment's activities cover the Karlovo and Staroselo parts of the Balkan Mountains.
- Four Goriyani detachments set up in the summer of 1951 are active in the region of Plovdiv.

- Sapareva Banya Goriyani Detachment, an armed detachment organized in the autumn of 1951, very soon uncovered and destroyed.
- Assenovgrad Detachment
- Popovo Detachment, an armed Goriyani detachment of 16 people under the leadership of Dobri Christov Chupukov, active in the villages of the Popovo district, destroyed at the beginning of 1952.
- A Goriyani detachment in the Elena part of the Balkan Mountains, set up in 1950, uncovered and destroyed in 1951. Another Goriyani detachment is active in the same area in 1954.

The Bulgarian political emigration also takes part in the Bulgarian armed resistance. State Security official records reveal that in 1955, 52 armed groups from abroad enter Bulgaria and join the Goriyani movement. The groups are organized and dispatched to Bulgaria by the Bulgarian National Committee, later called the Bulgarian Liberation Movement.

### **The Bulgarian Political Emigration in support of the resistance movement**

In the first years after the establishment of the communist regime in the country many Bulgarians cross the border illegally and join the organizations set up by the political emigration to support the Bulgarian resistance.

### **Emigrants' organizations in exile:**

- Bulgarian National Committee  
"Free and Independent Bulgaria"
- Bulgarian Liberation Movement
- "Free Bulgarians" Union
- Bulgarian Human Rights League
- Free Bulgarian Centre
- Bulgarian Hearth
- Provisional Bulgarian Mission
- Union of the Bulgarian Anarchists Abroad
- Bulgarian Organization "Tsar Simeon"
- Bulgarian National Front "Freedom"
- Bulgarian National Front "Struggle"
- The Bulgarian Social Democratic Party in exile
- Union of the Bulgarian Ex-Military in exile
- Students' Organization "Stefan Stambolov"
- The Bulgarian Orthodox Church in exile,
- and others.

The first Bulgarian NATO company is set up in 1951 near Zeilsheim, a small German town not far from Frankfurt am Main, raised entirely from Bulgarian political emigrants. Throughout its 14 years of existence, about 2,500 Bulgarians join its ranks. All soldiers and officers are Bulgarians who had managed to illegally escape from the country and join the company to defend the free world from the communist menace (The Warsaw Pact) in the hope to contribute to the liberation of Bulgaria from communist enslavement.

In the years of détente the Eastern bloc representatives at East - West talks persistently raise the subject of the emigrant companies in NATO and insist that they are dissolved. The Bulgarian National Company within NATO is dissolved on 3 June, 1964.





**Georgi Marinov (Tarpana),  
commander of the Sliven Gorjani unit, private archive**



**Photographic evidence of a militia action against the Gorjani,  
MVR Museum; photo F. K.**



Общ изглед на змоянската в  
местността „Драгунбей“ в която  
бандитите са съхранявали сляпо  
количество хранителни продукти  
и др. вещи.

A Gorjani dugout depot  
MVR Museum; photo F. K.



Ръководителя на бандата Христо  
Несторов убит при заварждането се престреля.

The commander of a Gorjani unit, killed in a fire exchange  
MVR Museum; photo F. K.

# The Punitive Labour Camps

## LRC

### (Labour Reformation Communes)

On 20 December, 1944, closely following the example of GULAG, the Soviet forced labour camp system, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers passes in contradiction to Article 73 of the acting Constitution of Bulgaria an “Ordinance for Setting up Labour Reformation Communes for Politically Dangerous Individuals”, i.e. punitive labour camps for political opponents,. According to Article 1 of this Ordinance “Individuals, dangerous to the country’s state order and security can be forcefully sent to specialized labour camps ...under the close supervision of the People’s Militia (the official name of the civilian police forces).”

Setting up of the labour camp system in Bulgaria begins even before the passing of the Ordinance. On the basis of a report by the Minister of the Interior Anton Yugov, the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party assigns the State Security Departments the task to prepare lists of untrustworthy individuals that have to be removed from cities and border regions into safer environment. Up to 1948, the resettlement and internment carried out by the Militia and State Security Services and the local administrative authorities. In 1948, a specialized “Internment and Prisons” section is set up within Department Four of the State Security.

Thousands of Bulgarian citizens are imprisoned in these labour or actually concentration camps, forced to work in grueling conditions and subjected to mental and physical cruelty, thrashings, murder, and exhausting hunger with no access to medical care.



Many either die in the camp or remain handicapped for life. Death certificates state false diagnoses. Dead bodies are not given to relatives for burial, but are secretly taken out of the camps and buried in secret leaving no trace behind.

On 21 January, 1958, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party passes a Decision for stepping up the struggle against “hooligans” and “profligate looters” by interning them in labour camps. Young boys and girls who wear Western-fashion clothes and hair styles, listen to or perform Western music and listen to Western radio stations all fall into that category.

Peter Gogov, chief of the Lovech labour camp, confesses during an interrogation held after the downfall of the communist regime in 1989 that from 1945 to 1962 there were about 44 labour camps in Bulgaria. Sources, including books on the subject and memoirs indicate a larger number, namely about 83 labour camps in existence at various places and for various lengths of time over the 1944 – 1962 period.

### **Labour Camps on record**

- Zeleni Dol in the region of Blagoevgrad, the first labour camp in Bulgaria after the 9th of September 1944, set up on the demand of the Soviet occupational forces. 203 people are interned in this camp including German citizens and German women married to Bulgarians. The camp exists from September 1944 until December 1945.
- Sveti Vrach Station, a labour camp near the city of Sandanski, set up in January 1945.

- Kutziyan Mine near Pernik, in operation from October 1945 until the end of 1949. Mainly counter-revolutionary Russians are confined to the camp. During 1948, a large group of supporters of Nikola Petkov agrarian party are also confined to this camp.
- “Black Sea” Mine near Bourgas, January - April 1945
- Bogdanov dol, Pernik region, from spring 1945 until 1951.
- “Tolbukhin” Ore Mine camp
- Nikolaevo Mine, Stara Zagora region, from 1948 until July 1949.
- “Rositza” dam, from October 1946 until 1948.
- Nozharevo, Silistra region, from the middle of 1947 until the middle of 1952.
- The Boyana village in the region of Tutrakan, a camp for women set up at the beginning of 1947.
- A camp for women at the outskirts of Veliko Turnovo, set up in 1947.
- Bosna camp, Tutrakan region, set up in 1947.
- Boshuliya camp, Pazardjik region, from 1945 until 1949.
- Belene, a camp set up by a Council of Ministers’ Decree on 27 April, 1949, as a camp for political opponents of the Communist Party. The camp spreads over the Danube river islands of Persin, Goliyama Burzina, Shturtcheto, Magaretza, Belitza, Sovata and Predela. During the first year, 800 people were interned in the camp. During 1953, the camp receives 1,917 people with 6-month to 7-year sentences. The camp is temporarily closed down from 5 September until 5 November, 1956.

- Lovech – one of the camps notorious for its harsh regime and commonly called “The Camp of Death”. It is set up in 1959 when the first 166 people from the Belene camp are brought in to toil at the nearby stone quarry. The prisoners, some of them intellectuals and artists, work at the quarry in the most inhuman conditions under impossible compulsory labour quota. Many are clubbed down to death in the most sadistic of ways. Others die from torture, systematic thrashing or from exhaustion.

In 1990, General Mircho Spassov confesses to the Prosecutor of the Labour Camps’ Case No. 4:

*“We, members of the Politburo of the Central Committee and our Ministry, vigorously copied the Soviet comrades’ methods and drew from their experience. In 1959 I was the youngest Deputy Minister of the Ministry of the Interior and was assigned to set up the camp in Lovech.”*

Skravena, Botevgrad region – in the summer of 1961, 300 women from the Lovech labour camp are sent to Skravena.

In communist Bulgaria, 22 jails functioned in addition to the labour camps, which hold political prisoners until 1989.

After the downfall of the communist regime in Bulgaria, all those responsible for setting up the labour camps and/or for the murders and tortures in them go unpunished.

Actress Nadia Dunkin, former prisoner in one of the camps and one of the main witnesses of the labour camp case, is found killed in her home, right before she is to testify in court. The case itself is closed by limitation in 2002.



statistics for prisoners doing time for  
counter-revolutionary activities by 1 July 1956

<i>social status</i>	<i>number of people</i>	<i>% of all sen- tenced people</i>
poor and middle class peasants	1168	42.58
tradesmen	370	13.49
workers	357	13.01
state employees	349	12.72
freelancers	175	6.38
Kulaks	120	3.37
members of Collective Farms	100	3.65
students	67	2.44
unemployed	37	1.35
<b>total number of sentenced prisoners</b>	<b>2743</b>	<b>100</b>

*Political prisoners who served the longest periods in  
the prisons of time in communist Bulgaria*

<i>Name and surname</i>	<i>Time served (years)</i>
Vasil Uzunov	28
Ilija Minev	27
Vasil Zlatarov	20



The quarry at the Lovetch forced labour camp 2011,  
photo F. K.



The quarry at the Lovetch forced labour camp, 2011  
private archive





**Former Forced Labour Camp guards giving testimony in court after the fall of the communist regime, private archive**

# From social demands to political uprising Bloodshed during the workers' strike in Plovdiv, 4 May 1953

On the evening of 3 May, 1953, night shift workers from the former “Tomasiyan” tobacco factory in Plovdiv revolt, throw out the factory guards, close down the factory and barricade themselves inside one of the biggest tobacco warehouses called “Ivan Karadzhov”. On the morning of 4 May, militia / police/ surround the tobacco warehouse and lock the doors from the outside. That same morning, workers from two other warehouses, “Stefan Karadzhiev” and “Georgi Ivanov”, mostly women, stop work. The strikers in the first warehouse break down the doors and drive away the militia guards. The strikers from all three warehouses gather together at an improvised rally in the factory courtyard. The strikers are joined by fellow workers who are not doing a shift at the moment.

The number of people protesting keeps on increasing when other citizens start joining them and reaches several thousand, according to eyewitnesses. They demand that the government restores the working conditions they used to enjoy before the nationalization of the factory. High ranking party leaders headed by Interior Minister Anton Yugov arrive from Sofia. The Minister tries to talk to the people; they throw stones at him and he is forced to withdraw. The militia receive orders to start shooting at the crowd.

Several strikers are shot dead on the spot, two of them women; 50 are wounded. Hundreds are arrested. Kiril Dzhavezov, leader of the strikers, is caught near the railway station and shot dead. The exact number of strikers killed cannot be determined because the authorities impose severe ban on any publicity or commentaries on the issue.

The ignition spark of the uprising first flares up in 1953 in Stalinallee, in the Eastern sector of Berlin. Increased quotas for construction workers are the direct cause for their revolt, to be joined later by workers from other branches and ordinary citizens. On 15 June, the first 80 workers start a protest parade under the slogan of “We demand reduced quotas”. Hundreds of other workers join the parade. Protesters make for the trade union house which turns out to be locked; they then head for the government chambers. By lunch time, thousands of workers, protestors and citizens gather in front of the building. Together with union demands, they raise political slogans like: „*Down with the government*“ or „*Free elections*“ and others.

In 1953, during the June uprising in Berlin, Bulgarian State Security reports indicate that the resistance movement in Bulgaria becomes better organized. In 1953, 75% of all events classified by the authorities as „hostile and counter revolutionary” are group activities and only 25% are individual ones.





The cigarette-making factory in Plovdiv in the 1940s,  
St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library archives



The cigarette-making factory in Plovdiv 2012, photo 2012

Демонстрациите в Съветския сектор на Берлин, които станала на 16 и 17 Юни 1953 год., са нова проява и борбата на човечеството срещу тиранията. Подобни акции и действия от сега нататък могат да се очакват. Тези демонстрации се разпростриха в цята Източна Германия, и показаха омразата и отвращението на германския народ спрямо, така наречената, «Народна демократична република». От направените снимки се вижда, че духът на съпротива срещу комунистическото потискане и тирания е жив и подър.



Leaflet distributed by the Gorjani: "The demonstrations that took place in the soviet sector of Berlin on 16 and 17 June, 1953 are yet another expression of the struggle of mankind against tyranny. The demonstrations have spread throughout East Germany and make clear for all to see the hatred and loathing of the German people for the so called 'People's Democratic Republic'. The photos show that the spirit of the resistance against the communist oppression is up and coming", MVR Museum; photo F. K.



## The Border

One of the ways for Bulgarians to resist the regime is by risking their lives trying to cross the closely guarded Bulgarian borders. Those who manage to pass through are branded “traitors of the Motherland” and are sentenced by default. Their relatives have to live with a lifelong stigma and suffer restrictions at all levels of life, including the opportunities for professional and career growth.

Hundreds of Bulgarians perish in their attempts to cross the borders. On 28 August, 1952, the Presidium of the National Assembly passes a Decree No. 359 permitting border guards to shoot point-blank at anyone trying to cross the border. The Southern and Western Bulgarian borders are studded with the anonymous graves of people killed while trying to escape to the free world. These graves bear no mark because “enemies of the people have no right to anything, not even a grave.” During the first years of the communist regime in Bulgaria, many members of the opposition are taken to the borders and shot down in engineered “illegal attempts to flee the country”.

From the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, security control in Bulgaria’s borderline area, 15 to 20 or more kilometers in depth, including minefields, a system of special appliances, the so-called “Klyon”, and a State Security agent network becomes so tight that all illegal attempts at border crossing are rendered practically impossible. Escapees are either shot dead on the spot, or apprehended and put on trial. Until 1975, the usual sentence for apprehended escapees is up to 15 years of imprisonment.

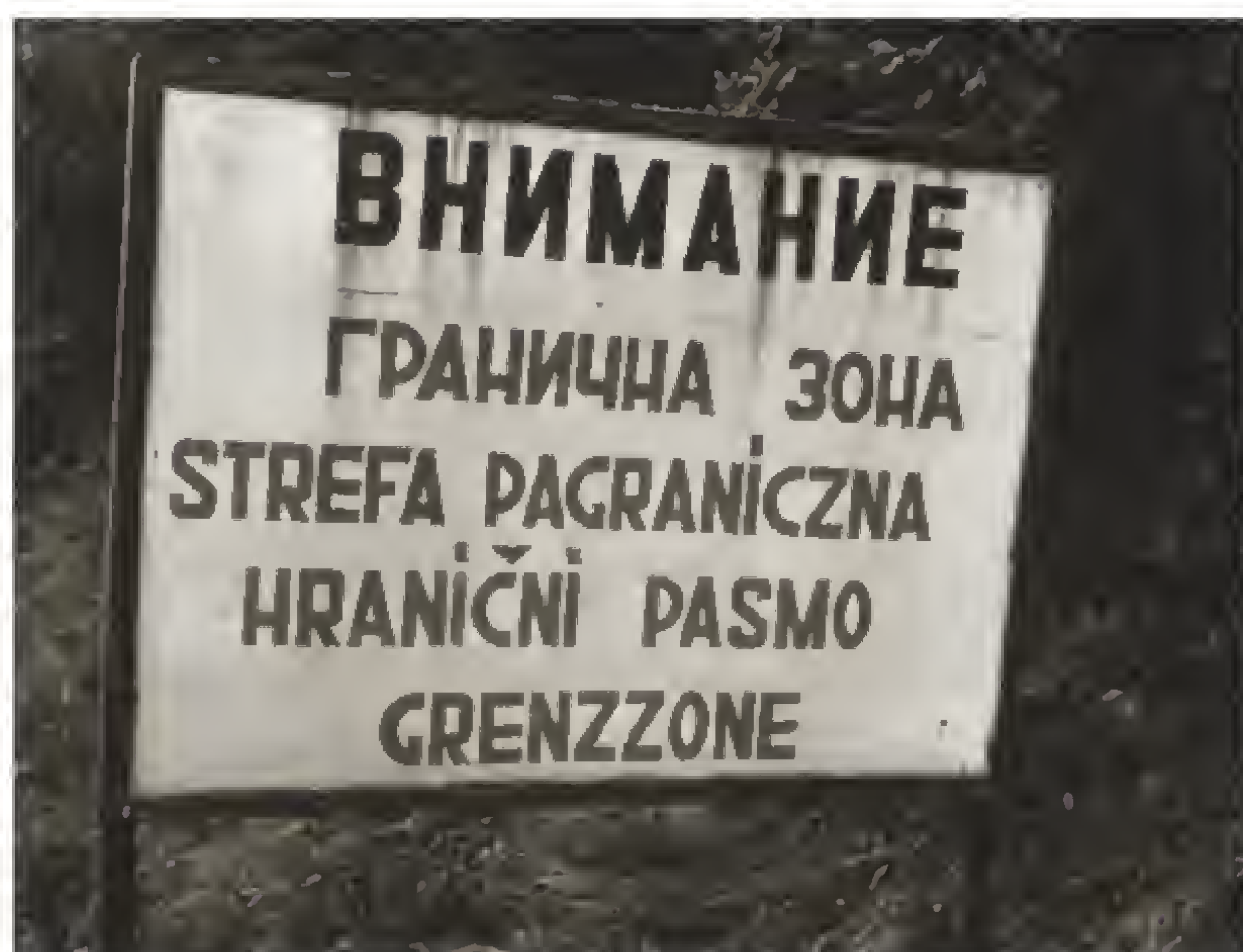


With the erection of the Berlin wall, many citizens of the German Democratic Republic try to escape to the West by crossing the Southern Bulgarian border. Usually, they perish or get caught. The Bulgarian authorities hand over the escapees to the GDR authorities.

The Bulgarian State Security conducts operations as an integral part of the entire security services system in the Eastern bloc countries with headquarters in Moscow. There is a stable cooperation between the Bulgarian State Security and the German Stasi in line with Lenin's understanding that Soviet power needs "a military organization of agents".

This cooperation includes surveillance of citizens, elimination of political enemies, surveillance and recruitment of foreign citizens, industrial espionage, executing KGB orders in third countries, surveillance of political emigration, and spying on each other. Among their most frequent joint activities during the 1970s and 80s are the pursuit of East German citizens trying to escape to the West through the Southern Bulgarian borders; the exchange of information about contacts between citizens of the German Democratic Republic and their compatriots from the Federal Republic of Germany in Bulgarian resorts and similar contacts among students at universities. Stasi informs the State Security about the behavior and contacts of Bulgarian officials when they travel to the Federal Republic of Germany.

They also provide information about their activities, interests and even about the shopping they do.



The Bulgarian frontier,  
BSTU MfS-NA-IX-17587, S. 0265

## Седем деца са били застреляни на границата

**БОРИСЛАВ ЧАЛЪКОВ**

**СОФИЯ.** На 29 април 1948 милиционери убиват група ученици, направили опит да пресекат българо-гръцката граница. Младежите са от село Любимец, родителите им до ден днешен не знаят къде са техните гробове.

От април тази година депутатът Стоян Райчевски иска от министър Михайлов повече данни за трагедията, станала преди 45 години, но отговор получи едва вчера. Лаконично Виктор Михайлов съобщи: след получен сигнал в свилениградската милиция, че 10 души ще преминат българо-гръцката граница, е организирана засада от милиция и гранични войски.

Тя била ръководена от кап. Джамалов и кап. Здравков. При „престрелка“ са загинали 7 души, 10 били заловени, а 5 все пак успели да достигнат свободата. По-късно „за организиране на въоръжена група“ и за „недоносителство“ (1) на различен срок са били осъдени 20 души.

Толкова. Думата „деца“ Виктор Михайлов предпочете да не произнася. Оказа се също, че в архивите на МВР няма и следа за мястото, където учениците са били заровени.

Но за комунистическите престъпления все още има давност...

“On 29 April, 1948, seven schoolchildren were shot dead while attempting to cross the Bulgarian border into Greece”  
–the headline of a newspaper report of a parliamentary debate  
on crimes committed in the frontier zones  
private archive



Rabotnitchesko delo daily, August 1963: a map of Berlin divided into “democratic” Berlin and “west” Berlin, the latter subdivided into three occupation zones (French, British, American), photo F. K.

# Grenzgebiet

Frontier Area

Région frontière

Пограничная зона

Betreten und Befahren verboten

Passage not allowed

Défense de passage

Вход и въезд воспрещаются

frontier signboard in the DDR part of Berlin, private archive



## The Border

In 1988, based on the Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of the Interior of the Bulgarian People's Republic and the Ministry of State Security of the German Democratic Republic signed on 26 November, 1974, Bulgarian Interior Minister Stoyanov and his GDR counterpart Minister Erich Fritz Emil Mielke sign a new Agreement on Cooperation and Collabouration between Chief Directorate Two of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior and Chief Directorate Two of the GDR Ministry of State Security for the period 1988 - 1993.

A plan for the prospects for joint activities between Department Six of the State Security and Chief Directorate Two of Stasi in 1984 - 1986 dated 8 December, 1983

- A State Security report on “stepping up measures against Bulgarian citizens escaped to the West and their relatives in Bulgaria” dated 24 February, 1953, reads:
- “The traitors’ relatives not engaged in court proceedings, if still in working capacity, are to be sent to the camp at Belene.
- All their immovable property is to be confiscated.
- All their remaining possessions, including their livestock are their own responsibility.
- Children aged 14 to 18 are to be sent to Labour Schools under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. One of the reformatories is to be used for the purpose.
- Children aged 7 to 14 are to be sent to special schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.



Privat Archiv



Frontier military, DA Archivi 70-1792-1-1



BSIU

000106

### Übertragung aus dem Russischen

STRIP: 0571001

Minister für Staatssicherheit der DDR

Генерал-майор М. И. К.

Byrdin

Walter Carson Milk

Die von Ihnen erhaltene Information über die Tätigkeit der feindlichen bulgarischen Emigranten und ihre mögliche Beteiligung an Diversions- und Terrorakten in der VR Bulgarien ist von besonderer Wichtigkeit und Aktualität.

Bestätigt werden die Angaben über die Führer der Bulgarischen Befreiungsbewegung (BOB), die Zeitschrift "Bydessaht", das "Informationsbulletin der Freunde der Heimat im Exil" (Informationsbulletin des Bauernverbandes im Exil), das BKK und die BNP, über die BOB-Organisation in der BRD, über die Beratungen der BOB in Speyer, die illegalen "autonomen Zellen" und den Aufenthalt von BOB-Führern in der Türkei (unseren Angaben zufolge auch in den USA, Jugoslawien, Griechenland, Italien und der BRD) sowie über Pläne und Absichten zur Durchführung aktiver terroristischer, Diversions- und provokatorischer Wühlstätigkeit gegen die VRB.

Im wesentlichen stimmen die Angaben überein, die die gedruckten und verbräuteten Propagandamaterialien, die Bestrebungen der BOD-Führung zur Verlagerung der Wühlstätigkeit auf das Territorium unseres Landes, die Beziehungen zwischen den einzelnen Führern und Organisationen und ihre Verbindungen zu Führern feindlicher Organisationen von Emigranten sozialistischer Staaten betreffen.

Einige der Angaben zur terroristischen Tätigkeit stimmen nicht mit den uns vorliegenden Informationen überein. Es wurde festgestellt, daß die Zwischenfälle in Gorna-Orjachowiza, Sopot, Wraxa, Plowdiw (in der Fabrik "Alen mak")

**Working together for a shared purpose:  
Stasi providing the Bulgarian State Security with information  
about the activities of the political emigration**  
BSTU - MfS, Abt.X, Nr. 117, S. 106

## Impact of the 1956 Hungarian uprising

The Hungarian uprising in 1956 has a strong impact on Bulgarian society. The political secret police starts preventive arrests and internment of the so-called 'former citizens', representatives of the intelligentsia, students and other people.

State Security agents report that anti-Soviet leaflets in support of the Hungarian uprising have appeared in secondary schools throughout the country: in high schools in the villages of Bregovo, Vidin district, Belimel, Ruzhintsi and Vladimirovo, Michailovgrad district, Dimovo, Belogradchik district; in the towns of Teteven, Nikopol, Straldzha, Varna, Vidin and Yambol; in 32nd high school in Sofia, the High School of Economics in Pleven, the Technical Mining School in Pernik, the "Stalin" Mechanical College in Sofia and in other schools. Students from different high schools and colleges make demands for fewer compulsory Russian language lessons and for the cancellation of the celebration of the Soviet October Revolution Day. Similar demands come from the students from the Higher Institute for Theatrical Art in Sofia, the Faculty of Philosophy with the Sofia University, the Higher Engineering and Construction Institute in Plovdiv, the Higher Institute of Economics in Varna and others.

Early in the morning on 5 November, 1956, 372 citizens from a list drawn by the authorities are arrested and most of them are sent to the labour camp of Belene.

Individuals and entire families on information that they do not support the regime are banished from towns and cities and resettled in the interior of the country. An initial group of 384 families from a list of 3,796 families are banished from Sofia; most of them ending up in labour camps. In the autumn of 1956, over 500 students are expelled as eventual participants in demonstrations and uprisings on the model of their Hungarian colleagues.

### **The Prague spring**

The party nomenclature (establishment) of Bulgaria and of the other countries in Eastern Europe that have remained under Soviet influence after the Second World War, are greatly worried by the political liberalization in Czechoslovakia which starts at the beginning of January 1968 and goes on until 20 August, 1968, and is widely known as the Prague spring. The security services receive additional assignments to closely observe young people and intellectuals.

On 3 August, 1968, the party leaders of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia gather together in Bratislava to sign the so-called Bratislava Declaration attesting to their unquestionable loyalty to the ideology and practices of communism and their irreconcilability with the bourgeois ideology. Bulgarian party leader Todor Zhivkov is the first to voice the idea of interference in Czechoslovakia; he is supported by Walter Ulbricht and Wladyslaw Gomułka.



A group of Czechoslovakian experts on Bulgarian language and literature send an "Open Letter" to the Bulgarian "Literaturen Front" weekly expressing their concern about the dissemination of untrue information about events in Czechoslovakia in the Bulgarian press.

On 2 August, 1968, the Bulgarian Council of Minister passes the top secret Decree No. 39 enacting the decision "to render armed support to the Czechoslovakian people in the struggle against the counter-revolution in their country". The military intervention called "Operation Danube" begins on 21 August, 1968, when the joint troops of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary invade Czechoslovakia.

Bulgaria participates with two rifle regiments (12th and 22nd regiment) numbering 2,164 servicemen and with 26 tanks.

The 12th regiment is assigned to take control over the region of the cities of Banska Bistritsa and Zvolen and to disarm the Czechoslovakian military units stationed there.

The 22nd regiment is assigned to transfer to the Ruzyne and Vodohotsi airports near Prague. One Bulgarian soldier from the 22 regiment perishes in the action. All Bulgarian soldiers are conscripts who have no idea of their destination until the last moment. As some of them are to say later, many of the conscripts are totally shocked and suffer deep psychological traumas when they see protesting Czechoslovakian boys and girls their age standing in front of their tanks.

In the aftermath of both the Berlin uprising of 1953 and the Prague Spring of 1968, the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party uncompromisingly pursues a firm and steadfast policy aiming at suppressing information that might have an impact on the Bulgarian society. The communist authorities step up pressure and tighten control, mainly on the intelligentsia and the young people. Artistic life suffers a return of the 1947-1958 stagnation. "Following the events in Czechoslovakia, the State Security ideological departments have expanded enormously and assumed total control over everything that is considered to be ideological", says writer Georgi Markov, in later years murdered by the State Security in London for criticizing the communist regime.

Individual and group protests against the regime increase, but the communist authorities impose a total blackout. The revolt in the Stara Zagora prison is an example. On 9 September, 1969, on the day of the 25th Anniversary of the communist coup d'état in Bulgaria, five political prisoners from the Stara Zagora prison overtake the place after the evening retreat and free from their cells 80 more political prisoners. The revolt is crushed by regular army troops, its main organiser Petko Chobanov commits suicide.

## After the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

The signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975 awakens Eastern bloc nations' hope and expectations for liberation from the totalitarian regimes. Human rights, as re-endorsed by this historic document, emerge as their new weapon.

A new type of opposition appears. More and more people from Eastern Europe venture to protest against the limitations enforced upon their rights and demand that they are strictly observed by the communist authorities.

The activities of the Solidarity Union in Poland give a new impetus to all human rights' movements in Eastern Europe. During the autumn of 1980, following in the footsteps of the free Polish unions, workers go on strike in Romania, Georgia and the Soviet Baltic Republics. Voices of discontent make themselves heard and subversive ideas come to the surface in Bulgaria as well. In September 1980, Directorate Six of the Secret Service whose function is to keep a close watch on "all political and ideological enemies" is assigned with the task to "ward off organized enemy activities provoked and influenced by the anti-socialist forces in Poland". Until the end of same year, the Directorate carries out "purposeful operations" aimed at the intelligentsia, the young people and the "counter-revolutionary elements". The authorities impose severe censorship on books, newspapers, films and all kinds of propaganda materials coming from Poland. The massive flood of Polish tourists to the Black sea coast in summer is the cause of great concern to the State Security.



The Bulgarian press abounds in propaganda distorting the facts about the situation in Poland in order to create wrong notions of the Polish trade-unions' aims and of the political will of the Polish people for democratization of their country. The communist party "Rabotnichesko Delo" official daily reprints numerous articles from the Soviet "Pravda" and "Izvestiya" dailies "exposing the interference of the Western powers in Poland's internal affairs".

On 14 October, 1981, Todor Zhivkov submits a memorandum to Politburo expressing his concern that what happens in Poland might occur in Bulgaria as well. Department 2 of Directorate Six of the State Security services observes an increase of anonymously circulated leaflets and gatherings of young people in private homes to discuss the Polish events. A group of young people appear to have planned to put down on paper a "Declaration-80" and have it circulated outside Bulgaria (classified by the authorities as a "menace to the "rule of law").

"Dissidents" is one of the State Security's major surveillance/intelligence operations in 1981-1982 targeted at a group of creative artists in Sofia, Bourgas, Varna, Stara Zagora, Yambol and other cities. The authorities arrest people on charges of dissident activities; some are sent to psychiatric clinics. About 45% of the 312 authors of anti-regime leaflets disclosed in 1982 are young people. During the same period, the State Security services record information about 141 manifestations of anti-Soviet feelings. Under the influence of the events in Poland, the number of informal youth groups in Bulgaria increases. According to the services, in 1982 there are 64 such groups with 295 participants in comparison to 18 groups with 86 participants in 1980.

During the autumn of 1986, a few former political prisoners write “An Open Letter of Appeal” and send it to the Vienna Conference reviewing implementation of the Helsinki agreement concerning Human Rights.

*“An Open Letter of Appeal”*

*Esteemed representatives of the European countries, the USA and Canada, we would like to make an appeal to you and the European public:*

*“The Vienna Conference should not conclude its work until the most fundamental human rights of all European people’s are fully guaranteed. Until the day comes when each and every European citizen can freely and without fear of persecution express his/her thoughts, opinions and convictions in oral or written form”.*

The authors of the Appeal also write down and sign a Declaration to be annexed to the Memorandum of Dissidents from four East European countries on the occasion of the anniversary of the Hungarian uprising and in connection with the Berlin uprising, the Prague Spring and the Polish events.

The two documents are signed by Iliya Minev, Eduard Genov, Grigor Simov, Tseko Krustev, Stefan Savovski and Bozhidar Statev. On 16 January, 1988, all of them set up the Bulgarian Independent Human Rights Association. The Association’s objective is to defend human rights and freedoms that have been brutally violated for more than four decades by the communist rule in Bulgaria.

Orosz Barátaink!

## NE LŐJJETEK!

Becsapnak benneteket. Nem ellenforradalmárok, hanem forradalmárok ellen harcoltok. Mi harcoló magyarok független, demokratikus, szabad Magyarországot akarunk.

A ti harcotoknak nincs értelme. Nem fasisztákra, hanem munkásokra, parasztokra és egyetemi hallgatókra lőttök.

Szüntessétek be a harcot!

A Forradalmi Magyar  
Ifjúság

РУССКИЕ ДРУЗЬЯ!

## НЕ СТРЕЛЯЙТЕ!

Вас обманули! Вы боретесь не против реакционеров, а против революционеров, мы — борющиеся венгерцы — хотим независимую, демократическую, свободную Венгрию.

Ваша борьба никакого представления не имеет. Вы стреляете не на фашистов, а на рабочих, крестьян и студентов.

ПЕРЕСТАНТЕ БОРОТЬСЯ!

Революционная Венгерская  
Молодёжь

leaflets from the Hungarian 1956 Uprising, private archive



## **В ъ з в а н и е!**

1. Настояваме Държавна сигурност веднага да прекрати борбата.

2. Настояваме съветските отряди веднага да напуснат територията на столицата

3. Настояваме на всички, които са взели участие в борбата, да се даде амнистия.

4. Да се даде право на политическо убежище на тези съветски бойци, които в битките са заставали на страната на работниците

5. Настояваме унгарската народна армия да поеме опазването на реда

ЦЕНТРАЛНО ОБЩЕЖИТИЕ  
на  
ТЕХНИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

leaflets from the Hungarian 1956 Uprising, private archive



Eduard Genov, [elimir.ucoz.ru](http://elimir.ucoz.ru)

## Citizens deprived of basic human rights

As per Article 2 of the Peace Treaty between Bulgaria and the Allied Powers, ratified with Decree No.4 of the Presidency of the People's Republic of Bulgaria on 26 August, 1947 and promulgated in the State Gazette, issue 201 of 30 August, 1947, effective as of 15 September, 1947; Bulgaria agrees to observe its citizens' fundamental human rights:

“Bulgaria is under the obligation to take all measures necessary to ensure that each and every person under state jurisdiction regardless of race, sex, language and religious denomination shall enjoy all human rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of speech, free press and publications, freedom of religious and political convictions and of public gatherings.” However, the communist regime in Bulgaria had for its entire term (1944 - 1990) systematically and with impunity been violating the rights of all Bulgarians as provided for by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1977, Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the German United Socialist Party and head of state of the German Democratic Republic, voices his position on the issue:

*“There may be no human rights activists in the German Democratic Republic because all human rights are fully observed in this country”.* However, the number of people trying to legally leave the German Democratic Republic constantly increases.

Thus by the end of the 1970s, an informal movement called *“Voting on a Request for Expatriation”* is founded. Members of the movement are mainly young people. As reported by Robert Havemann in 1976, the number of movement members has grown to 120,000; according to AND, that number is 200,000.



**Human Rights and Freedoms citizens  
have been deprived of**

- the right to life and safety;
- the right not to be subjected to haphazard arrest, detainment or exile;
- the right to freedom of movement;
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- freedom of convictions and the right to express them;
- freedom of speech and press;
- freedom of organization, gatherings and association;
- freedom to vote: to elect and be elected;
- freedom of movement, including leaving the country or returning to the country
- freedom of choice of residence;
- equal access to public and state employment;
- the right not to be discriminated;
- the right to information;
- et al.

## **The regime withholds information about hazards for people's health due to the Chernobyl disaster**

In the days and weeks after the worst accident in the history of nuclear power generation, the Chernobyl disaster of 26 April, 1986, the communist rulers of Bulgaria do their best to withhold the truth from its citizens. They do not inform them about the hazards for their health, while taking all safety precautions for themselves and their families. The citizens are never warned that a huge cloud loaded with radioactive particles is about to enter the Bulgarian air space. On 1 May, 1986, when radioactive pollution of Bulgaria is at its peak as a result of the Chernobyl accident, communist authorities march citizens into the mandatory first-of-May parades. On the same day, as usual, people are out for picnics; sports lovers fill up stadiums to the brim; thousands of mothers take their children out to enjoy the warm weather. At the same time, well-informed communist functionaries hide behind the concrete walls of their offices and homes, stock up their families with drugs and enjoy mature drinks and special foodstuffs delivered from all over the world.

## **The privileges of the communist rulers**

The communist rulers of Bulgaria, while proclaiming the state as "socialist", deprive the majority of its population from basic human rights and freedoms and at the same time set up a multi-tiered system of privileges for their party elite.

At the top of privilege hierarchy are the supreme party nomenclature (establishment): all members and candidate-members of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party; members of the Council of Ministers; members of the State Council; heads of departments with the Central Committee; the first secretaries of the district committees of the Bulgarian Communist Party and some former party activists. Their families also enjoy the privileges.

The nomenclature enjoys almost unlimited power and makes complete use of all the good things of life in the West, which of course are inaccessible or even forbidden to ordinary citizens. They shop at special shops, have access to special medical services, winter and summer recreation houses, apartments, residences, farms producing bio foodstuffs and drinks; all those are provided and delivered to them by the State Safety and Security Directorate.

Communist functionaries and activists at district, municipal and village levels also enjoy privileges. Other beneficiaries of the privilege system include the communist party watchdogs: the top state administration, the party-controlled military and police, the law-enforcement and repressive authorities.

The privileged status of the party minority is legalized by Article 1 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria which enacts the Bulgarian Communist Party's leading role in society. This principle extends onto the judiciary system which strictly follows the rule that if any party member is to be brought to justice the party organization where they pay their dues has to be consulted and give their consent first. Rank-and-file members of the Bulgarian Communist Party also enjoy privileges in terms of employment, enrollment in higher educational institutions, taking up specific positions, opportunities to work abroad, additional social acquisitions etc.

“Active fighters against fascism and capitalism” - the term refers to a particular segment of the party elite, oddly enough constantly increasing in number, enjoying various privileges at the expense of the majority of citizens.



The concept of “fighters against fascism” is coined to give the said group of persons some legitimacy before the democratic world, since in the communist party’s terminology the terms “fascist” and “fascism” designate any active or passive disagreement with the communist doctrine.

In June 1945, a specific Ordinance on people’s pensions is passed granting to the above group of privileged party members higher pensions than those of ordinary people’s. In this way, the retirement system becomes part of the network of privileges.

Higher pensions are but one of the many privileges granted to “active fighters against fascism and capitalism” and to their children and grand-children. They enjoy guaranteed advantage before other people when they apply for employment or pursue higher posts or academic degrees; they are granted cost-free or very cheap housing in the central parts of big cities and free villas; they get cars with priority; enjoy special medical care and even guarded burial grounds.

The range of privileges expands to include blood relatives (down to three times removed) and relations by marriage. Contrary to the laws of nature, the number of “active fighters against fascism and capitalism” keeps on increasing until 1989. By the end of the 1970s, the privileged “active fighters against fascism and capitalism” number 200,000.

On 9 February, 1960, the British Embassy in Sofia files a report on the privileged status awarded to Bulgarian citizens loyal to the regime stating:

*“In fact, in Bulgaria there is an elite whose standard of living is at least ten times higher than that of the common man.”*

ЛЪЧЕЗАР ЗАРКИН

БУЛКАН 71



З.Н.Г.

ЛЪЧЕЗАР

1.1.1970

Новогодишна нощ! О, гостенке най-скъпа!  
 Прекриваша в дванайсти час във всеки дом,  
 що във усмивките на хората разцъфваш.  
 Пред красотата ти, възшебница, поклон!

За тебе, скъпи Лъчко, мисля в този миг,  
 събрал море от Обич и Любев в душата.  
 Със тръпнещ поглед през решетки впит,  
 аз мъча се да те прегърна в тъмнината.

И в този миг към мен със красота блестяща,  
 един рубинен Лъч небето разкраси.  
 Познах усмивката ти чиста и блестяща  
 и без да искам се от радост просълзах.

Григорий Ив. Георгиев

1970  
ГОДИНА

Бяхме в обща килия от 18 човека. Настаняха ни на работа в дърводелната. Бяхме задължени да работим, понеже всеки един от нас носеше годишно на отдел "ЗАТВОРИ" по десет-петнадесет хиляди лева. Условията на живот тук бяха трудни, но все пак поносими. Най-лошото бе, че започнаха да ни провокират, правейки опит да унищожат нас и идеалите, за които бяхме влезли в затвора. Не успяха. Два

A New Year greeting to his son by Georgi Zarkin,  
 poet, journalist and political prisoner, murdered in prison,  
 private archive



## У К А З

за прекласиране пенсиите на активните борци против фашизма и капитализма, определени от трудово възнаграждение

1. Прекласирането се считащо от 1 юли 1972 г., пенсиите за изслужено време и старост и за инвалидност на активните борци против фашизма и капитализма, които са определени от трудово възнаграждение и са отпуснати до 31 декември 1970 г.

2. Пенсията се прекласира по съответните таблици на чл. 10, 17 и 20 от Закона за пенсиите, като за база се взема трудовото възнаграждение, от което е определена пенсията, умножено по определен коефициент. За пенсиите, отпуснати до 31 декември 1957 г., вместо трудовото възнаграждение, от което е определена пенсията, се взема трудовото възнаграждение, от което тя е била причислена към 1 юли 1958 г.

Коефициентът, с който се умножава трудовото възнаграждение, съответства на календарната година, следваща последната година от периода, трудовото възнаграждение през който е послужило за база при определяне на пенсията.

За определяне базата за причисляване на пенсиите се прилагат следните коефициенти:

за 1951 г. — 2,51; за 1952 г. — 2,30; за 1953 г. — 2,14; за 1954 г. — 2,02; за 1955 г. — 1,97; за 1956 г. — 1,91; за 1957 г. — 1,82; за 1958 г. — 1,78; за 1959 г. — 1,72; за 1960 г. — 1,58; за 1961 г. — 1,50; за 1962 г. — 1,46; за 1963 г. — 1,41; за 1964 г. — 1,38; за 1965 г. — 1,34; за 1966 г. — 1,28; за 1967 г. — 1,16; за 1968 г. — 1,09; за 1969 г. — 1,06 и за 1970 г. — 1,00.

За пенсиите, определени от трудово възнаграждение до 1950 г. включително, се прилага коефициентът за 1951 г.

3. Пенсията на активните борци против фашизма и капитализма, пенсиониран като военнослужещи и приравнени към тях, се прекласира, считащо от 1 юли 1972 г., по условията на указ № 112 от 31 юли 1971 г. за изменение на чл. 3, 8 и 50 от Закона за пенсиите.

4. Когато размерът на пенсията, причислен по този указ, се окаже по-малък от досегашния, запазва се старият размер.

Изпълнението на указа се възлага на министъра на труда и социалните грижи.

Издаден в София на 14 август 1972 г. под № 1857 и подпечатан с държавния печат.

Председател на Държавния съвет на Народна република България:  
Т. Желев

Секретар на Държавния съвет на Народна република България:  
М. Манчев

Б-2116

44. A decree for a recalculation, raising the pensions of the  
“Active Fighters against Fascism and Capitalism”,  
photo F. K.

## ЗАБРАНЯВА СЕ АБОНИРАНЕТО НА УЧЕНИЦИТЕ

за списания, които не са разрешени

Министър на народната просвета  
и външните работи, че нито външни  
лица нито по училищата и пре-  
дмет ръководители на училищата  
не могат да разрешат и да абони-  
рат списания без разрешение от

Министерството на просветата  
и външните работи и до директорите и  
главните учители да не донесат  
по този повод да влизат в чуж-  
дите страни и да предлагат списа-  
ния за абонаменти.

An order forbidding schoolchildren to subscribe to magazines  
without the authorization of the Ministry of Education  
photo F. K.



## The regime succumbs

By the end of the 1980s, the communist regimes in the Eastern European countries begin to succumb one by one under the pressure of the people and on the strength of international agreements.

On 10 November, 1989, Todor Zhivkov is ousted from his position as Secretary General of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

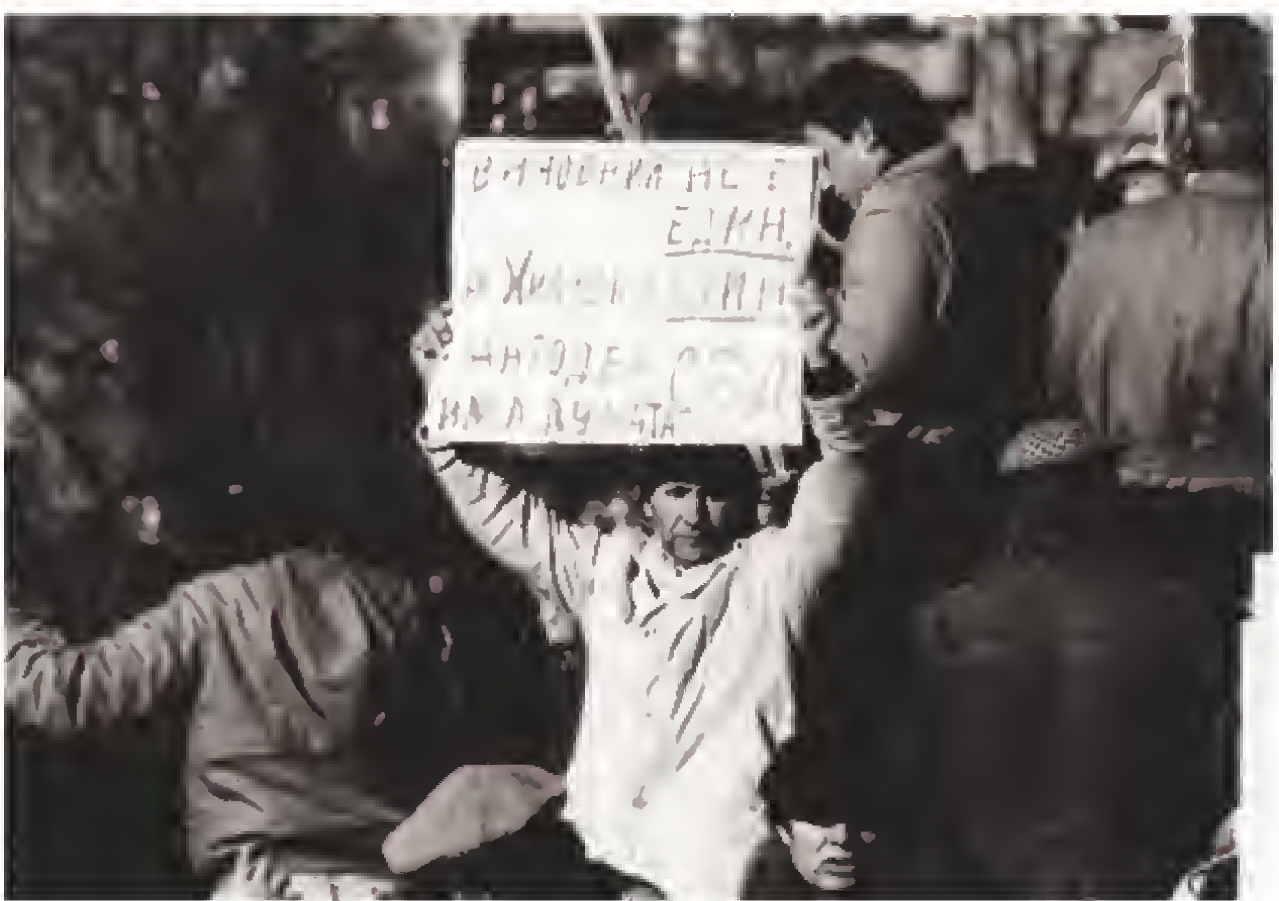
On 18 November, 1989, the first free rally against the communist regime is held in Sofia. The protestors demand democracy, free elections, human rights, lawsuits and accountability for those responsible for the regime's atrocities.

On 15 January, 1990, Article 1 of the Constitution which enacts "the leading role" of the Communist Party, is cancelled under the pressure of protestors.

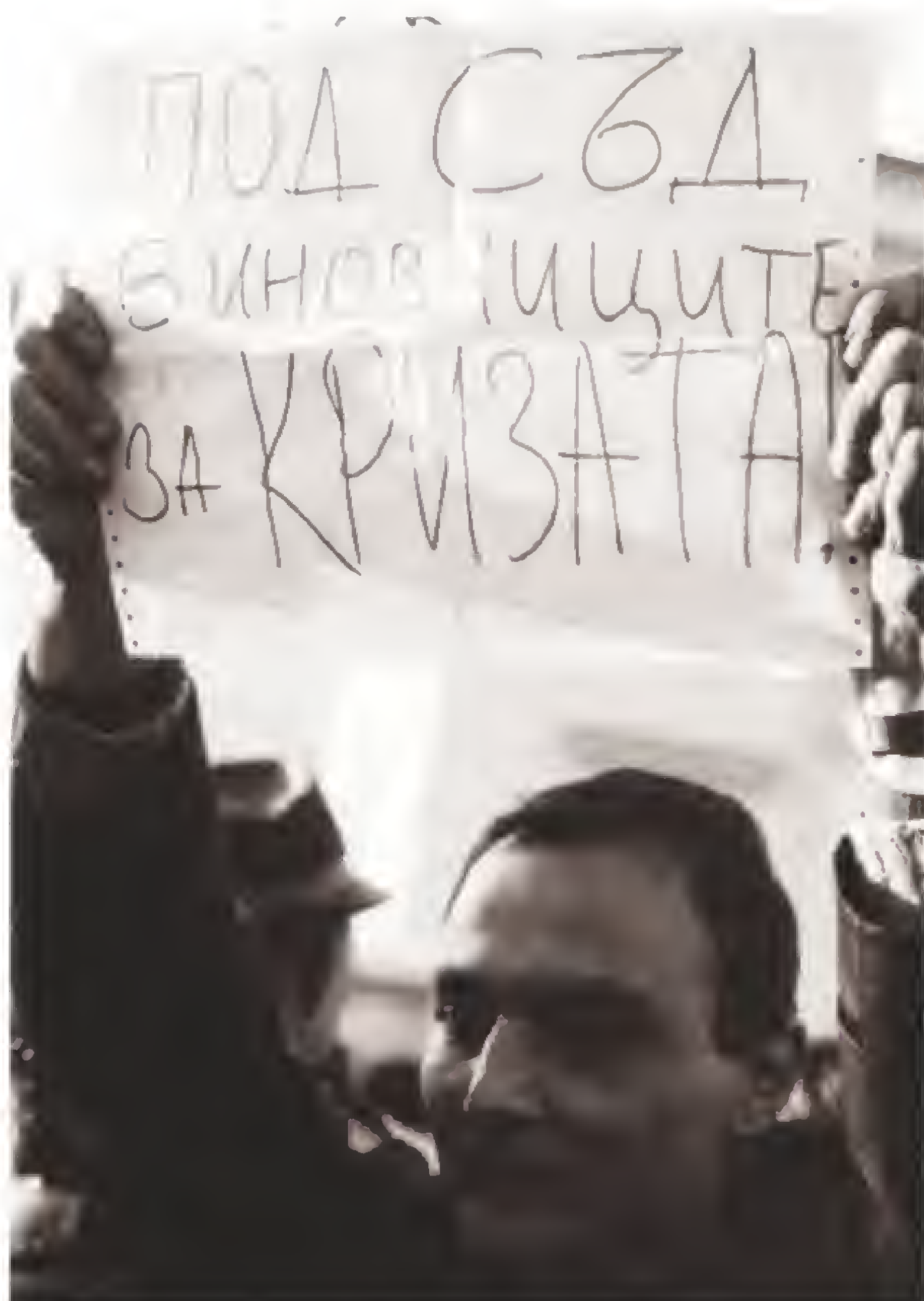
On 10 and 17 June, 1990, the first free elections are held after 45 years of communist dictatorship in Bulgaria.

The changes in Bulgaria are much slower than those in other East European countries because the structures of its former communist regime remain intact for a longer period of time.

The destruction of a large part of the State Security records and the delayed access to them, the purgation of archives from documents attesting to the regime's political and economic crimes, the concealment of the truth about the regime, the manipulations of public opinion all contribute to the prolonged and painful "transition" period in Bulgaria during which the former party nomenclature and their figureheads including characters from the former repressive institutions seize the economic power while facing no responsibility for crimes and malpractices they have to account for.



**demonstrations in Sofia, 1989: "The culprits are not one person  
but a thousand and one. We demand a 'People's Tribunal'"**  
photo F. K.



**A 1989 demonstration: “Those responsible for the crisis to be brought to trial”, private archive**



**memorial to the victims of communism in Sofia, photo F. K.**



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*The aim of this project is to make the public aware of facts from the recent history of Bulgaria: of the terror and the repressions the communist regime implemented to impose its grip on the country and to consolidate its power; of the way the Bulgarian citizens were deprived of their rights and freedoms; of the privileges granted to senior Party activists and people in the employment of the repressive organs and of the various forms of resistance the Bulgarian people put up against the dictatorship.*



*Considered from this point of view, the Exhibition is a political act in the best traditions of enlightenment; it informs and it gives a warning.*

*For totalitarianism did not perish with the crash of the world communist system; it is a persistent social and political temptation and a grave threat to the rule of law in Europe and the democratic setup of its state systems, now as in the not so distant past.*